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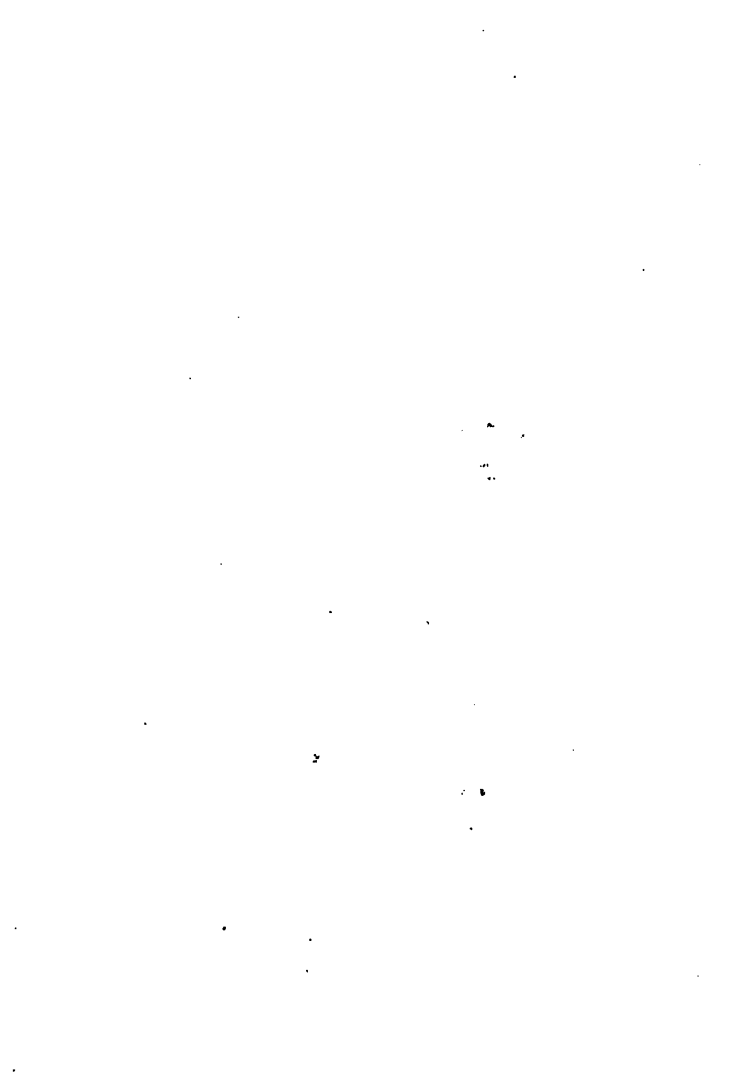
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נפתולי אלהים

A COURSE OF S E R M O N S

ON THE BIBLICAL PASSAGES ADDUCED BY CHRISTIAN
THEOLOGIANS IN SUPPORT OF THE
DOGMAS OF THEIR FAITH.

Preached in the Bayswater Synagogue

BY

HERMANN ADLER, PH. D.,

Minister of the Congregation.

הוה שקוד ללמוד תורה
ודע מה שתשיב לאפיקורוס



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PREFACE.

THESE Sermons have been committed to the Press in deference to the wishes expressed by a great number of my own Congregation, as well as by other members of the Jewish Community. But, while complying with these wishes, I feel it my duty to repeat here emphatically what I have mentioned in the body of this little work,—that it is intended for *defence*, and not for *offence*. It was not my purpose when I delivered these Discourses, nor is it my intention in now printing them, to attack the religion professed by the majority of our countrymen. My object is simply to acquaint my brethren in faith with the true meaning of the passages in the Bible, which are commonly cited by theologians in support of the dogmas of

Christianity ; and to expose the unsoundness of interpretations, which are disseminated among us by missionaries with a zeal as misguided in its motives, as it is barren in results.

I have given in the following pages what I conceive to be the true explanations of those passages ; they have been culled, in the main, from the writings of the principal commentators on the Bible and of our religious philosophers. I have also derived considerable assistance from the controversial works bearing upon the subject, such as **חזוק אמונה** by R. Isaac Troki, **נצחון** by R. Lippman Mühlhausen, and **כור מצדף האמונות ומראה** by R. Isaac Lopez.

With the exception of some necessary revisions, the Sermons are printed in the same form as that in which they were delivered. I have, for this reason, retained the brief exhortations which were addressed to young congregants on the occasion of their becoming **בר מצוה** (attaining their religious majority). I have also added the Sermon preached last Pentecost ; for, although it did not form a portion of the course, it treated of a kindred topic.

A few of the subjects touched upon in these pages,

have for the reason above mentioned been treated with less explicitness than their importance would seem to demand. I ardently hope, that I have acted judiciously, both in what I have said, and in what I have left unsaid.

May these Sermons contribute, by the blessing of God, to achieve the object, which must be dear to the heart of every Israelite—to vindicate the truth of his heaven-born Faith !



SERMON I.

PREACHED ON SABBATH פ' תוריע ומצורע
(APRIL 25TH), 5628.

MY DEAR BRETHREN,

JUDAISM is not a proselytizing faith: it seeks neither to make converts nor to attack other creeds, believing as it does that "the sincere and virtuous professors of every religion may hope to enjoy future bliss."* But Judaism is at the same time filled with the greatest solicitude to defend the citadel of its faith from all assaults; Judaism is exceedingly jealous not to allow one single member of its flock to stray from the fold.

* Maimonides, Hilchoth Melachim, chap. viii., 10, 11. Teshuba, chap. iii., 6.

We acknowledge with warmest gratitude the religious liberty, the civil equality, we enjoy in this blessed land, where "we may walk in freedom with none to molest us or make us afraid." But just on this account we deplore the more deeply the unceasing efforts made by men of misguided, misdirected zeal, to win our brethren over to *their* faith. We must deplore that want of tolerance which prompts those self-created dispensers of salvation to imagine, that we are temporally and eternally lost, unless we abjure our religion. We must deplore the fact that immense sums are spent, year after year, by Societies for promoting Christianity among the Jews, in turning bad Jews into worse Christians—sums that might be spent worthily in converting to humanity that seething mass of vice and depravity which festers in the heart of this great city, or in imparting instruction to the children who throng our courts and alleys, and who grow into manhood in ignorance of the first lessons of virtue. We must grieve, grieve deeply, that the holiest possessions of man, his faith and his conscience, should be made matters of barter and purchase.

Now we cannot, and we certainly do not, wish to cope with those Societies in the employment

of their most powerful instrument, the *golden* bait, with which they entice a few ignorant or deceitful stragglers. But we must not allow to pass unchallenged the arguments which they adduce from the Bible for the purpose of proving the truth of their faith, and which they try to disseminate by means of missionaries and tracts distributed broadcast over the whole land. I do not believe, that an Israelite is ever truly convinced by any such arguments. But, alas! many are so ignorant of the Bible, and of the signification of the words in the original, and so little acquainted with the context of passages which may be quoted, that they are too often at a loss for a reply. And if not shaken in their faith they are put to shame, and allow their adversaries to triumph over them. I know full well by my own experience how very often in our intercourse with our fellow-citizens religious questions are brought forward; and it is surely a source of deepest reproach and humiliation, if we, who have been appointed the custodians of Revelation, are unable satisfactorily and conclusively to answer them. It is for this reason that I feel I am fulfilling a sacred obligation, if in a course of sermons I point out to you, and carefully explain, the principal passages

of Scripture that are adduced by Christian theologians in support of their dogmas. I do so, in fulfilment of a wish that I know lies at the hearts of most of my congregants, and in obedience to the exhortation of an ancient teacher, Rabbi Eleazar ben Arach, who said

הָיוּ שְׂקוּד לְלִמּוּד תּוֹרָה וְדַע מֶה שֶׁתִּשָּׁיב לְאַפִּיקוֹרוֹם

“Be diligent in studying the Law, so that you may know how to reply to him who would create doubts in your mind.”*

The author of this maxim, one of the most eminent of our sages, lived at the time when Christianity began to develop itself, and when its professors often engaged in religious disputations and controversies with the Jews. Rabbi Eleazar knew well that in these encounters a thorough knowledge of the Law would prove a mighty and successful weapon, a sharp sword to cut through the knotted web of sophistry.

I was once engaged in such a controversy, when my adversary triumphantly remarked, that the *third* word in the Bible proved the truth of

* Pirke Aboth, chap. ii., 14. That this maxim refers to the arguments adduced by the professors of Christianity may be gathered from the corresponding passages, Sanhedrin (p. 38), and Pirke de R. Eliezer, chap. ii.

the principal dogma of Christianity. The word אֱלֹהִים is there used to denote the Deity, and my antagonist asserted that this word being in the plural clearly proved, that the Godhead consisted of more than one person.

Before entering upon the doctrine of the unity of God, so clearly and unmistakably enunciated in the Bible, I answered him that the *second* word in the Bible בָּרָא refuted his argument. If אֱלֹהִים were indeed a plural noun, the verb which it governs ought to be in the plural also. We ought to find in the text בָּרְאוּ and not בָּרָא. As the verb is used in the singular, the substantive with which it agrees, the word אֱלֹהִים, must necessarily be considered as singular also.*

It is true that the word, terminating as it does in ים, has a plural form, but we have as much right on that account to consider it plural as to call the words פָּנִים "face," חַיִּים "life," נְעוּרִים "youth," plurals. The Hebrew, like almost every

* The same argument is used in Bereshith Rabbah (p. 10), by R. Simlai. שאלו המינים את ר' שמלאי כמה אלהות בראו את העולם אמר להם אני ואתם נשאל לימים הראשונים ההדר כי שאל נא לימים הראשונים למן היום אשר ברא אלהים אדם אשר בראו אין כתיב כאן אלא אשר ברא חורו ושאלו אותו אמרו לו מה הוא דין דכתיב בראשית ברא אלהים אמר להם בראו אלהים אין כתיב כאן אלא ברא אלהים:

other language, has in its vocabulary words with a plural form but having a singular signification. The term אֱלֹהִים is of this class of words, the reason being that it signifies the concentration of powers רַבּוּי הַכִּחוֹת. Thus the Hebrew word for master has a plural form, e.g. יוֹסֵף וַיִּקַּח אֲדֹנָיו יוֹסֵף. "And Joseph's master took him."* אִם בְּעֵלָיו "If the owner thereof be with it."§

But we must bear in mind that אֱלֹהִים is not the only name applied to God in our Holy Language; there are many others that are as strictly singular in form as they are singular in meaning. I need only mention the שֵׁם הַמְּפֹרָשׁ, the Sacred Tetragrammaton (which, on account of its sanctity, we are not allowed to utter); also יְהוָה and אֵל שֶׁדִּי the Almighty God.

If the Deity, indeed consist of more than one Being, how is it that in one verse of Isaiah, (XLIV., 6), we find the word denoting Him in the plural form וּמִבְלָעֵי אֵין אֱלֹהִים "Beside me there is no God," and in the same chapter (v. 8), in the singular, הֲיֵשׁ אֱלֹהִים מִבְּלָעֵי "Is there a God beside me?"

* Gen. xxxix., 20. *Vide* Rashi ad Gen. xxxv. 7.

§ Ex. xxii., 15.

Again, the term אֱלֹהִים is applied to a judge :
 עַד הָאֱלֹהִים יָבֹא הַבֵּר שְׁנֵיהֶם “The cause of the
 parties shall come before the judge.”* The Lord
 said to Moses רָאָה נִתְּתִיךָ לְפָרֹעַה אֱלֹהִים “I have
 made thee a god to Pharaoh,” § *i.e.*, a direct re-
 presentative of myself. Now, if it were true
 that the plural form of אֱלֹהִים points to a Trinity,
 we must conclude that Moses and each of the
 judges were triune beings.

This explanation will at once dispose of the ar-
 gument that is sought to be deduced from the
 expression וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ
 כְּדֹמוֹתֵנוּ “The Lord said, We will make man in
 our own image after our likeness.” || The fact that
 the Lord said “WE,” and not “I” (will make),
 is alleged to point to the dogma of the Trinity.
 Nothing, however, can be clearer than that here
 the so-called *pluralis excellentiæ* or *pluralis majes-
 ticus* is used, and that this form is introduced to
 give befitting dignity and emphasis to the nar-
 rative of the creation of man—a being who was to
 be formed in the image of the Most High. In
 a similar manner we find the plural employed by

* Ex. xxii., 8. § Ex. vii., 1.

|| Gen. i., 26.

kings in their decrees, just as at the present day sovereigns use the plural in their proclamations. Thus Artaxerxes says in Ezra (iv. 18), "the letter which ye sent unto *us*:" and (vii., 24), "also *we* certify you." Yet no one would conclude from these expressions that they referred to more than one ruler.* And indeed, as if the Bible would at once dissipate the idea that there could be more than one Deity, the singular form of the pronominal suffix is used in the very next verse, (Gen. i. 27) וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ
 "So God created man in His image."§

One word will suffice to dispose of the argument with reference to the threefold repetition of the word קדוֹשׁ, "holy," in the adoration of the Angels.|| This simply denotes emphasis. In Jeremiah vii., 4, הַיְכָל ה' "the temple of the Lord," and in chap. xxii. 29. אֶרֶץ "earth,"

* Thus we in our common intercourse address a single person with the plural pronoun "you." Germans use the third person plural as the *pronomem reverentia*.

§ Many other instructive instances are adduced in the Talmud (Sanhedrin p. 38) to show כל מקום שפקרו המינים תשובתן בצידן that wherever a passage occurs which might give rise to doubts, another placed in juxtaposition, serves at once to remove the difficulties. cf. Jalkut Daniel § 1065.

|| Isaiah vi. 3.

are three times repeated. Were there then *three* temples? Are there *three* earths?

But there is surely no need for me to dwell farther on the subject.* All these cobwebs of subtilties are at once swept away by the distinctness with which Holy Writ tells us ה' אֶחָד "The Lord is One:"§ solely simply *one*. The words ה' אֶחָד not merely signify that the Lord is One, and that there are no other gods beside Him (in contradiction to the polytheistic belief of heathen nations) but *one without any division of parts*.|| The Christian doctrine of a plurality in unity, *viz.*, that there are three persons in the Godhead, is alike repugnant to reason and opposed to the words of Scripture.

* I will only mention as a curiosity the argument in favour of the Trinity adduced by the Rev. Mr. Liddon in the Bampton Lectures of 1866, from the threefold repetition of the Most Holy Name in the benediction of the priests. He says: "A single mention of the sacred name would have been most natural in a system the object of which was to impress belief in a Divine unity." Is it not astonishing that an accomplished scholar like Mr. Liddon should stoop to such quibbling?

§ Deut. vi., 4.

|| cf. Ezekiel xi, 19. ונתתי להם לב אחד "and I will give them *one* heart."

The next passage to which I would direct your attention is the tenth verse of the 49th chapter of Genesis. In the benediction which the patriarch bestows upon Judah, he says:

לֹא יִסּוּר שֵׁבֶט מִיְּהוּדָה וּמִחֻקֵּי מִבֵּין רַגְלָיו עַד כִּי
יָבוֹא שׁ י לָהּ וְלוֹ יִקָּהֵת עַמִּים:

“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor the lawgiver from between his feet *until Shiloh cometh*; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.” This is the rendering of the passage given by Christian translators, who consider it to be one of the principal references to the founder of their faith contained in the Pentateuch. They allege that the verse signifies, that dominion would belong to Judah, until their Messiah—who, they say, is here spoken of by the name of Shiloh—should come, when the sovereignty would be taken from Judah. And they assert that this prophecy has been fulfilled; for within seventy years after the author of their faith had appeared, the second temple was destroyed, and Judah was deprived of his political supremacy.*

A very conclusive answer, however, can be

* *Vide* Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament*, vol. i., p. 59.

given to this argument. The sovereignty of Judah did *not* cease at the advent of the so-called Shiloh; it ceased 588 years *before* the birth of the Nazarene, when Nebuchadnezzar carried Zedekiah, King of Judah, into captivity. During the entire period of the second temple, not one king of the tribe of Judah ruled over the nation. The Jewish kings, during this period, were the Maccabees, (who, being high priests, were members of the tribe of Levi,) and Herod the Great, with his descendants, who were foreigners. How, then, can it be maintained that "the sceptre did not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet," until the coming of the Nazarene? Again, throughout the whole Bible the word שִׁילֹה is never applied to any personage. It is the name of a well-known town in the centre of the Holy Land, belonging to the tribe of Ephraim. In this city, the tabernacle was pitched at the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites under Joshua, and there it remained until the time of Eli.*

The passage probably refers to an important event in Jewish history.§ When Rehoboam the son of Solomon ascended the throne, and

* Judges xviii. 31; I Samuel i. 3, *et passim.* § I Kings xii.

made himself unpopular by acts that were devoid of wisdom and discretion, the tribe of Ephraim proclaimed its own independent authority, and it was joined by nine other tribes. This revolution took place at Shechem, close to which Shiloh, for centuries the place of general and national assemblies, was situated.* From that time Judah, who had exercised so great a preponderance in the nation;§ who, in the wanderings in the desert, had marched at the head of the tribes; to whom, in times of national danger or difficulty, the leadership had been entrusted; from whom sprang David, the first king over united Israel, and Solomon, the ruler of the nation, at the height of its prosperity; Judah now no longer maintained his supremacy. The translation of the passage, then, ought to run, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet, until he cometh to Shiloh, and the people gather to him." This is the interpretation of the passage given by Rashbam,|| and followed

* Judges xxi. 19.

§ I Chron. v. 2.

|| *Vide* the Commentary (attributed to Rashi) on II Chron.

x. 15: לא ירד ממלכותו עד כי יבא שילה פתרון עד כי יבא יהודה שילה להמליך שם רחבעם ושם לו יקחה עמים להמליכו ושם נהלקה המלכות וכי

by most Jewish translators. I cannot state with absolute certainty that it is the correct one, for there is scarcely any other passage in Scripture which equals this in difficulty, and there is none which has called forth a greater variety of expositions. I have, however, shown you that the Christian interpretation of the passage cannot by any possibility be correct, opposed as it is to the events of history.*

This exposition concludes my discourse of to-day. Next Sabbath I propose to consider some passages in Isaiah which are believed by Christian commentators to refer to the founder of their faith. I shall also commence my exposition of the important fifty-third chapter of that Prophet, which I would ask you previously to read carefully, so that you may be able to follow and remember the arguments I shall bring before you. And I shall truly rejoice if by my explanations I succeed in arming you with some knowledge of the Bible, so that, in obedience to the counsels of the Sage, you may be enabled to reply to him who would raise doubts and diffi-

* I deem it right to mention that the Targum and some few of our commentators refer this passage to the Messiah whose advent we expect. This point will be fully treated in Sermon IX.

culties in your minds,—so that you may be able proudly to unfurl, and triumphantly to wave, the banner of our faith before the nations of the world.

SERMON II.

PREACHED ON SABBATH פ' אחרי מות וקדושים
(MAY 2ND).

I PROCEED to lay before you some passages contained in the writings of the sublimest of prophets, Isaiah, than whom no prophet has been believed by Christian expositors to make more frequent and distinct references to the founder of their faith. The reason of this belief lies in the fact, that the book called by the name of Isaiah contains frequent allusions to, and clear predictions of, the advent of a Messiah. But it will not be difficult to prove to you, that these prophecies were not fulfilled in the appearance of the Nazarene. Besides these prophecies, however, there are many passages not at all bearing upon the advent of the

Anointed, which, by being mistranslated and wrenched from their context, have been made to appear as if confirming some of the doctrines of the Christian Church.

A noteworthy instance of this is to be found in the explanation given by Christian writers of the fourteenth verse of the seventh chapter:

לֵבָן יִתֵּן ה' הוּא לָכֶם אוֹת הַגָּה הָעֹלָמָה הָרָה וְיִלְדֶת
בֶּן זִקְרָאת שְׁמוֹ עִמָּנוּאֵל

“Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel.”

This text is supposed to announce the supernatural birth of the Nazarene; and it is alleged that his divine nature is indicated by the name עִמָּנוּאֵל (“God with us”) which he is to receive. Now, the answer to this argument is twofold. In the first place, עֹלָמָה is not synonymous with בְּתוּלָה, the expression used in the Bible to denote a virgin. One quotation—* וְהָרָךְ נָבֵר בְּעֹלָמָה—is sufficient to show that the word עֹלָמָה does not signify “virgin.” It simply denotes a young woman, one who is either marriageable or already married. Se-

* Prov. xxx. 19.

condly, the use of the name **עֲמֻנָאֵל** conveys no proof that reference is intended to a Divine personage; for, in Hebrew, many names, both of men and of things, are found compounded with **אֵל** "God," and other appellations of the Deity. Thus we find **מִיכָאֵל** "who is like unto God?" **נְאוּאֵל** "the majesty of God;" **אֱלִיעֶזֶר** "God is my help;" **יְהוֹנָתָן** "gift of the Lord;" **אֱלִיהוּ** "Jah is my God." Again, such terms as **אֵל אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** "Lord God of Israel;" * **ה' נְסִי** "the Lord my banner," § are applied to altars, signifying that they were erected to glorify the Lord, and to serve as memorials of the gracious help He had vouchsafed. We also read || that the name of the Messiah is to be **ה' צְדִיקְנוּ** "the Lord is our righteousness." Yet this cannot be taken as a proof that the Messiah was to be a divinity, for the same title is applied to the city of Jerusalem. ¶

* Gen. xxxiii. 20. *Vide* Rashi *ad locum*.

§ Ex. xvii. 15.

|| Jeremiah xxiii. 6.

¶ Jeremiah xxxiii. 16. This name signifies, that the mere mention of the Messiah and of Jerusalem will call to mind the righteousness of the Lord. Cf. Baba Bathra, p. 75, אמר רבי יוחנן שלשה נקראו על שמו של הקב"ה ואלו הן צדיקים ומשיח וירושלם:

But it is by referring to the context that the strongest objections to the Christian view are made apparent. Rezin, King of Syria, and Pekah, King of Israel, are allied together against Ahaz, King of Judah. Ahaz is greatly terrified, and Isaiah is sent by the Lord to encourage him and the nation, and to assure them by a sign that in a little time the enemies of the king would be confounded. Mention is made of this sign in the words quoted above; and then the text continues (v. 16): "For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest" (Syria and Israel) "shall be forsaken of both her kings."

The question must at once present itself to every mind,—How could the prediction of the supernatural birth, that is supposed to have taken place at least seven hundred years after these events, serve as an encouragement to Ahaz, and a sign that the divine promise of the preservation of his land from its enemies would be fulfilled?

The following is the most probable explanation of the passage. The word **עַלְמָה** refers to the young wife of the prophet himself; *she* was to bear a son, whom she was to call

Immanuel, this name being intended to indicate the protection which the Lord would grant the nation. The fulfilment of this prophecy is narrated in the following chapter, where we read,* “And the prophetess conceived and bare a son. Then said the Lord to me, Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz ;” (*i. e.*, speedy booty, hasty spoil.) “For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the King of Assyria.” It is quite evident that the child, here spoken of, is the child whose birth was predicted in the preceding chapter, and that while the name given by the mother was intended to indicate the protection God would grant the people, the name given by the prophet himself was to indicate the manner in which that protection would be manifested—viz., by the speedy destruction and ruin of the two allied kings.

The next passage of Isaiah that we have to consider is to be found in chapter ix., 6, 7 :

* Isaiah viii. 3, 4.

כִּי יֵלֵד יֶלֶד-לָנוּ בֶן נָתַן-לָנוּ וְהָיָה הַמֶּשֶׁה עַל-
 שִׁכְמוֹ וְיִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ כֹּלָא יוֹעֵץ אֶל גִּבּוֹר אָבִי עַד שֶׁר
 שְׁלוֹם: לְמַרְבֵּה הַמֶּשֶׁה וּלְשְׁלוֹם אֵין-קֵץ עַל כִּפּוֹא
 דּוֹר וְעַל מַמְלַכְתּוֹ לְהַבִּין אוֹתָהּ וּלְסַעֲדָהּ בְּמִשְׁפָּט
 וּבִצְדָקָה מִעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם:

The verse is translated as follows in the Anglican version:—

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.”

You are aware how, from the words “And his name shall be called The mighty God, The everlasting Father,” the divinity of the Nazarene is sought to be deduced.

But the application of these verses to the Christian Messiah can only be maintained by their being violently torn from their context. Both the pre-

ceding and the following verses speak distinctly of the campaign which the King of Assyria, Sennacherib, is about to undertake against Jerusalem. "Now, therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the King of Assyria, and all his glory; and he shall come up over his channels, and go over his banks; and he shall pass through Judah; he shall overthrow and go over; he shall reach even to the neck."* Then there would be terrible fear and alarm throughout the land, "and behold, trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish."§ The prophet, in continuation, predicts how the Lord would send them a wondrous deliverance: "They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them shall the light shine."|| He foretells in general terms how that mighty host would be defeated, not in battle, but by a miraculous, an awful dispensation: "for every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood, but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire."¶ This passage refers to the Divine visi-

* Isaiah viii. 7, 8.

§ *Ibid.*, viii. 22. Cf. II Kings xix.

|| *Ibid.*, ix. 2.

¶ *Ibid.*, ix. 5.

tation by which the army of Sennacherib was cut off in one night.* As the poet sings—

“For the Angel of Death spread its wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he pass’d;
And the eyes of the sleepers wax’d deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heav’d, and for ever grew still.”§

Now, why will the Lord thus deliver Israel? The prophet states the reason in the verse immediately following (v. 6): “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.” The miracle shall come to pass in the reign and for the sake of Hezekiah, the future King of Judah, who would be pious and act virtuously, and of whom it is said, that “he trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.” || When Isaiah declared this prophecy at the commencement of the reign of the wicked king Ahaz, his son and heir-apparent Hezekiah was twelve years of age, and had already given promise of a God-

* II Kings xix. 35; Isai. xxxvii. 36; II Chron. xxxii. 21.

§ Byron’s Hebrew Melodies—The Destruction of Sennacherib.

|| II Kings xviii. 5.

fearing life. To him the verses in question refer. It is therefore written, **כִּי יֵלֶד יֶלֶד לָנוּ** "for unto us a child *has been born*," not **יֵלֶד** "shall be born;" **בֶּן גִּתָּן לָנוּ** "a son *has been given*," not **יֵתֵן** "shall be given." How, then, can this prediction by any possibility refer to the founder of the Christian faith, who was born nearly seven hundred and fifty years afterwards?

Difficulties have been raised on account of the high and exalted names and qualities that are attributed to Hezekiah. But it can be easily shown that these epithets are in perfect harmony with the idiom of the Hebrew language. **אֵל גִּבּוֹר** should be rendered "the mighty hero," not "the mighty God." There are numerous passages in the Bible in which **אֵל** is not applied to the Deity, but to heroes, *e. g.*, **אֱלֵי מוֹאָב** "the mighty men of Moab;" * **אֱלֵי גִבּוֹרִים** "the strong among the mighty." § Nebuchadnezzar is called **אֵל גִּבּוֹרִים** "the mighty one of the heathens." || But even if we take **אֵל** in its

* Exod. xvi. 15.

§ Ezekiel xxxii. 21.

|| *Ibid.*, xxxi. 11.

usual signification of "God," the appellation would be almost a synonym of the very name which Hezekiah bore, **הֶזְקִיָּה** "Strength of God.* I have already told you that it was a practice in Hebrew to form proper names compounded of various titles of the Deity. §

אָבִי עֲדָ simply signifies "perpetual, constant father," and denotes that Hezekiah would be the devoted benefactor of his people. We find **אָבִי** used several times in this sense in the Bible—as: "And He hath made me a father to Pharaoh;" || "I was a father to the poor;" ¶ "And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." **

The title, "Prince of Peace," seems to be peculiarly applicable to Hezekiah when we bear in mind the miraculous deliverance, which the Lord vouchsafed to the nation, and the peace and tranquillity that Judah enjoyed during his reign. But how could that title with any degree of justice be applied to the founder of the Christian faith, who himself said, "Think not that I am come

* *Vide* Sanhedrin, p. 94, **חֻזְקָה שְׁחֻזְקוֹ יְהוָה חֻזְקָה שְׁחֻזְקוֹ**
את ישראל לאביהם שבשמים :

§ *Supra* p. 17.

|| Gen. xlv. 8.

¶ Job xxix. 16.

** Isai. xxii. 21.

to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword."

How could the words, "Upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom," be applied to one who never occupied that throne? Surely, with all these facts before us, we cannot be surprised that not only the Talmud * and our most ancient and valued commentators, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Kimchi and Abarbanel, but also critical Christian commentators, (of whom I will only mention the most learned, Gesenius,§) are unanimous in referring these verses to King Hezekiah.

I shall now proceed to the consideration of the celebrated prophecy of Isaiah, consisting of part of the fifty-second and the whole of the fifty-third chapter.

Upon this prophecy, Christian controversialists lay the greatest stress. Indeed, it is the only one that Paley brings forward in his "Evidences of Christianity." || It is believed to contain the prediction of the sufferings which the author of their faith was to endure, and the doctrine of the so-called "vicarious atonement."

As I suppose you to be familiar with the

* Sanhedrin, p. 94.

§ Commentar über den Jesaia, vol. i., p. 361.

|| Part II., chap. 1.

chapter, I shall limit myself to giving you a brief abstract of its contents.

The prophet predicts that the time will come when the servant of the Lord, who had long been despised and rejected, would be exalted and honoured. The Lord had caused him to suffer sorrow and affliction during a long period, and to be smitten and chastised for the transgressions and iniquities of others. But though stricken, persecuted, and oppressed, he remained patient and resigned. "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." And as a reward for this patience, he should enjoy prosperity, length of life, a numerous offspring; he should divide his portion with the great, and share the spoil with the strong.

It is asserted by Christian theologians that this prophecy refers to their teacher, who, they say, after having been persecuted by his contemporaries, offered himself as an atonement on behalf of his nation, obtained for them remission of their sins, and was exalted by being translated to heaven.

To this I reply, first, that the supposed accordance of the events of the Nazarene's life with this prophecy proves nothing; for, accord-

ing to the opinions of many eminent critics, the writings containing an account of his life and death were not contemporary records, but were compiled about 200 years after the occurrence of the events purporting to be related in them, and the various circumstances were then described in such manner as to tally with the prophecies of Isaiah. History was shaped to accord with prophecy ; in fact, to use a homely but expressive simile, the foot was cut so as to fit the shoe.

Secondly, there are numerous reasons which make it impossible to take the prophecy in the sense accepted by Christian commentators. Of these I proceed to state concisely some of the principal.

I. All the preceding chapters, from the commencement of the 40th, speak of a time when Israel would be in captivity. In this very chapter we read " loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O CAPTIVE daughter of Zion."* The Nazarene, however, was born while the second Temple was still standing, and Israel enjoying comparative independence.

II. The passage commences הִנֵּה יַשְׁכִּיל עַבְדִּי "behold my servant shall prosper." The ex-

* Isai. lii. 2.

pression 'servant of the Lord,' so often met with in the Bible, and especially in the writings of this prophet, is not once distinctly applied to the future redeemer; and if this expression is intended to denote the Nazarene, him who was believed to be God, how can he be called the servant of God?

III. It is here said of that servant of the Lord that he would prosper, be exalted and extolled, and that kings would shut their mouths in adoration before him; and, from the meaning which the words have in the original,* we learn that these events were to take place in his lifetime. These predictions, however, were not fulfilled in the lifetime of the Nazarene. Instead of being magnified and exalted he was sentenced to an ignominious death.

IV. The prophecy states of him **יֵרָאֶה זָרַע** "he shall see his seed." This signifies that the servant of the Lord should leave an offspring. The Nazarene, however, is said to have died childless. Disciples cannot be meant by this expression, for we nowhere find disciples called **זָרַע** 'offspring.' They are sometimes termed **בָּנִים** 'children,'

* Thus **הַשְׁכִּיל** denotes temporal prosperity, cf. Josh. i., 7, 8; 2 Kings xviii. 7; Prov. xvii. 8.

§ Chap. liii. 10.

even as a teacher is called אב 'father.' But the word ערע is nowhere used in this metaphorical sense ; it has never any other meaning than that of natural offspring.

V. The verse continues—יֵאָרֶיךָ יָמִים "he shall prolong his days." This expression in Hebrew is only applicable to temporal life, but we do not find that the Nazarene's days were prolonged, for it is related, that he was put to death at the age of thirty-three. Nor can the lengthening of days be held to refer to his divinity, for length of days cannot be attributed to God, to Him "who is the first and the last, and of whose years there is no end."

VI. It is stated* "therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." This clearly refers to temporal triumphs. But who were the great, who the strong, with whom he divided the spoil?

VII. "And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death."§ Gesenius remarks|| that this prediction if applied to the Nazarene has not been borne out by the facts, as related in the so-called New Testament.

* Chap. liii. 12.

§ Chap. liii. 9.

|| Commentar über den Jesaia, vol. iii. p. 186.

The exact reverse was the case; for he was put to death not with the rich, but among criminals; his grave was not with the wicked, for his body was placed in the grave of the wealthy Joseph of Arimathea.

VIII. The words in the 8th verse, **כַּפַּשְׁע עַמִּי נָגַע לָמוֹ** are translated "for the transgression of my people was *he* stricken." This translation is incorrect, for **לָמוֹ** is a plural, the equivalent of **לָהֶם*** and the passage should be rendered, "for the transgression of my people were *they* stricken." This would seem to point to the fact that a collective body and not a single individual is spoken of.

IX. The section concludes with the words, "and made intercession for the transgressors." Must not the question present itself to our minds, To whom did the Nazarene pray, seeing that he was said to be God himself?§

All these (and the list could be greatly ex-

* *Vide* Gesenius gram. Lehrgeb. pp. 216, 221.

§ For further objections I refer you to a work entitled "Israel Avenged," written in Spanish by Isaac Orobio de Castro, (translated into French by Henriques, London, 1770; and into English by Grace Aguilar,) which shows, verse by verse, that this chapter cannot be taken in the sense applied to it by Christian expositors.

tended) are forcible and strong objections to the Christian explanation of the prophecy. Several of the above arguments, indeed, have not been adduced by Jewish but by Christian expositors,* and all evidently point to the true sense of the chapter which I shall expound to you next Sabbath. I shall then show you that the prophecy refers to our nation, Israel, the servant of the Lord, whose sufferings and degradation were necessary for the accomplishment of his mission, but by whose glorious exaltation in the latter days the nations of the world will be impelled with all the strength of conviction to put their faith in the One and only God.

* I may mention especially Gesenius, Hitzig, and Knobel, whose commentaries on Isaiah are classical works.

SERMON III.

PREACHED ON SABBATH פ' אָמֹר (MAY 9TH.)

IN my last discourse I commenced my explanation of the prophecy contained in the 52nd and 53rd chapters of Isaiah, and I endeavoured to show you by an analysis of some of the expressions that the interpretation given by Christian theologians could not be the true one. I shall now ask you to consider that prophecy comprehensively, my purpose being to show you that the doctrine which is alleged to be contained in it,—a doctrine which is the corner-stone of Christianity,—is quite irreconcilable with the teachings of the Bible.

The doctrine is that of vicarious atonement. It is averred that by the sin of Adam all mankind incurred everlasting condemnation, and that for the purpose of saving them the Nazarene suffered bodily and mental affliction on earth,

nay, even an ignominious death. It is further taught that unless man believe in this Redeemer he is lost eternally, and that only the acknowledgment of his atonement can bring salvation. The doctrine of this atonement is chiefly founded upon the following verses of this chapter. "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed," (verses 4 and 5). Again: "He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken," (verse 8). Thus these passages are rendered in the authorized version. I do not admit that the translation is entirely correct, but I will not enter into that matter now. I will read to you a few lines from one of the principal Christian commentaries on the Bible,* so that we may know the sense in which Christian expositors take the foregoing verses: "Our Redeemer was appointed and undertook to make

* By Henry and Scott.

satisfaction for our sins, and to save us from the consequences. He was appointed to do it by the will of his Father, for the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. God chose him to be the Saviour of poor sinners, and would have him save them by bearing their sins and the punishment of them."

How monstrous a doctrine, how repugnant to all that the Bible tells us of the righteousness of God, *that an innocent and sinless man should suffer the punishment which the guilty have entailed upon themselves!* But let us take a calm view of the assertion. It is contended that God could not forgive man for the original sin committed by Adam until some one had suffered in the place and for the sake of man; *i.e.*, till a vicarious atonement had been made. Now, without at present entering upon the question of hereditary sin, let us consider the assumption which this statement involves: that God by himself is unable to forgive sins! Can we accept this assertion as true? Is the Lord not emphatically termed in the Bible* **אֱלֹהֵי כְלִיחוֹת** "a God ready to pardon?" Has he not proclaimed himself as **נִשְׂא עוֹן וְפֹשַׁע וְחַטָּאת וְנִקָּה לֹא יִנְקָה** "pardoning

* Nehemiah ix. 17.

iniquity, transgression, and sin, yet not suffering guilt to pass unpunished?"* In these grand words, He announces to us that though He punishes the unrepenting sinner who obstinately persists in doing evil, yet He is a merciful Father who indulgently bears with the faults of His erring children, when they return to Him with the shame-stricken confession of their guilt. § These words of the Bible surely prove that the Lord is able by Himself, without assistance or intervention, to forgive whatever sin may have been committed by man since man's origin. He is the All-sufficient, the Almighty God.

Yet it is said, truly God may be *able*, but was He *willing* to save and pardon mankind without the intercession and intervention of a mediator who was ready to sacrifice himself as an atonement? To answer this question conclusively, let us turn to a memorable incident recorded in the Bible.

The wrath of the Almighty was excited against His people Israel, for they had forgotten His behests, and had made themselves an idol of gold, and worshipped it. Moses, profoundly grieved, said to the Israelites: "Ye have sinned

* Exodus xxxiv. 7.

§ Joma p. 86 מנקה הוא לשבים ולא ינקה לשאינן שבים

a great sin, and now I will go up to the Lord ; peradventure I will make an atonement for your sin."* Deeply as he abhorred their conduct towards God, keenly as he felt their ingratitude towards himself, the great leader was ready to sacrifice himself for his nation. With matchless generosity and self-denial, with such love as never before or since burnt in human heart or burst from human lips, he exclaimed : " Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written." How did the Lord answer him ? Did He accept this vicarious atonement ? Did He accept this offering of the noble, self-sacrificing, self-denying hero ? Did He take the life of Moses, the meek, the faithful, and permit his blood to be an expiation of the people's sin ? No. The Lord completely rejected his vicarious atonement. He proclaimed מִי אֲשֶׁר הָטָא לִי אֶמְחֶנּוּ כִּסְפִּיר " Whosoever has sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book."§ The sacrifice of the innocent man could not save the

* Exodus xxxii. 30.

§ *Ibid.* xxxii. 33.

sinner. The righteous Judge of mankind declared, "In the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them."* These words forcibly illustrate the Jewish doctrine that every man is accountable for his own actions, and cannot release himself from his individual responsibility by the vicarious atonement of another, however great he be. We have no mediator to save us from the effects of our guilt, but our own sincere repentance, by which we hope to obtain the forgiveness of our God.

This doctrine of individual responsibility is again and again insisted upon in the Bible. It is clearly set forth in the 18th and 33rd chapters of Ezekiel. I will quote but a few verses from them. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son."§ And farther on;|| "I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God." Again; "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why

* Exodus xxxii. 34. § Ezekiel xviii. 20. || v. 30.

will ye die, O house of Israel ?”* These verses tell us, that we are all responsible beings ; no one can, no one need, make expiation for our sins. We require nothing but our own repentance and the love and mercy of our God to obtain forgiveness and salvation.

It has, however, been urged that the Bible has shadowed forth and typified the doctrine of vicarious atonement in the laws of sacrifices. It is argued, § “ When the Israelite presented a sacrifice, he, at the same time, and in the very act, confessed that he was a sinner before God, and deserved to die ; but according to God’s gracious will, the offering of an animal served as an atonement, for the guilt of the offerer was laid upon it and expiated in its blood. Of course, the death of the victim could not actually atone for sin, and hence the question may naturally be asked :—What did it mean ? Answer.—The sacrifice was *typical* and *symbolical*, and pointed to the one sacrifice for the sins of the world, which was to be offered by the Messiah, according to the prophecy already referred to (Isaiah liii.).” You will at once see that

* Ezekiel xxxiii. 11.

§ Gottheil’s ‘ Messiah : the hope of Israel,’ p. 89.

these arguments rest on an entirely false idea of the object and value of sacrifices. I have on a former occasion pointed out to you, that the Bible teaches us that offerings were entirely inefficacious, unless accompanied by sincere repentance and devout contrition. When a man had been guilty of any trespass against his neighbour; when he had withheld from him aught which had been entrusted him, or taken aught away by violence, he was enjoined first to redress the wrong he had committed, and then to bring his trespass offering.* The only value and efficacy of the offering consisted in this, that it proved the sacrificer to be repentant: it was an outward test and sign of his sincerity. “And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing.”† Again, it has been asserted that the atonement which the high-priest made on the great יום הכּפּוּרִים teaches that man can mediate between God and the sinner.‡ But this assertion also rests on an error. The atonement of the high-priest was of no avail for the individual, unless that

* *Vide* Leviticus vi. 1—7.

† *Ibid.* v., 5.

‡ Dr. M'Caul's Doctrine and Interpretation of the 53rd Chapter of Isaiah.

individual afflicted his soul, and passed the day in solemn repentance and sincere contrition for his iniquities. "Is not this the fast I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness," &c.* Our sages teach us, § האומר אחטא ויום הכפורים : האומר אחטא ויום הכפורים מכפר : "For him who sins with the idea that the day of atonement will expiate his guilt, for him that day is of no avail."|| The whole object of that day on which we repeat again and again the solemn words כִּי אֵין לָנוּ מִלֶּדֶד מוֹחֵל וְסוֹלֵחַ אֱלֹהֵי אֲמָתָה "for we have none to forgive and pardon us but Thee, O God," is to impress upon us the truth that we have no mediator to save us from the effects of our sins, but our own repentance, our own good deeds; that we have nothing to hope for but the infinite mercy of our Creator.

* Isaiah lviii. 6. § Mishna Joma, c. viii. sec. 9.

|| The rite of the scape-goat, which was "to bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited," (Leviticus xvi. 22,) was to admonish the people, that they should cast off their sins entirely. The ceremony was also symbolical of the fact, that the Lord would grant them complete forgiveness. Cf. More Nebuchim III. c. 46. "Sins are not burdens which can be shifted from the back of one man to that of another. All these sacrificial rites were intended to work an impression upon man's soul, for the purpose of stimulating it to repentance."

Let us now examine what would be the consequences of the existence of a vicarious atonement. "The good man and the sinner would thereby be reduced to the same level. The righteous man who sinned not, and the sinner who sinned, both alike would receive the Divine grace; the former by his own merit, the latter by the merit of his mediator; and the whole end and purpose of our earthly life would be stultified. The probation of this life would be of no avail. And if it were so, why should man yield up his pleasures, his passions, his material interests, his self, to good works that may be dispensed with, to virtues that are not necessary? Indeed, the theory of mediation, when carried to its extreme consequences, would be a monstrous reversal of the Divine scheme of man's creation and destiny. No; such cannot be the way of the perfect Judge. The Pentateuch and the prophets tell us most unequivocally that it is not; and reason leads us to the like conclusion."*

I have thus shewn you that this chapter

* Sabbath Readings, published by the Jewish Association for the Diffusion of Religious Knowledge, vol. iv. p. 27, on Responsibility.

cannot refer to the Nazarene acting as the mediator of mankind. Let me now submit to you the true interpretation of the prophecy.

Our expositors agree in saying that the servant, here spoken of, is the nation, Israel. Just one page before, the prophet, speaking in the name of the Lord, says עֶבְדִּי אֲתָהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר כָּךְ אֶתְפָּאֵר “Thou art my *servant*, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”* All the preceding chapters have spoken of the glorious exaltation that awaits Israel. The prophet now proceeds to speak in more explicit terms of this future greatness. “Behold my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.” He shall be exalted in the same degree as he had been degraded during his exile. On beholding this, all the nations and the kings of the earth will be astonished; they will call to mind that state of abasement which had formerly been the lot of the Israelites. Then follows that wondrous record of our nation’s sufferings, depicted by a master hand, on which each page in our history during the middle ages is a life-breathing, vivid commentary. “Israel

* Isaiah xlix. 3. Cf. xlii. 1. 19. xliii. 10. xlv. i. 21. xlv. 4.

was despised and rejected, acquainted with grief, and we (the nations of the earth) esteemed him not." Now, why was Israel dispersed to all quarters of the globe? Why had he to suffer all these afflictions? That he might fulfil his mission and wean mankind from error and irreligion. When at last the nations of the earth shall reflect upon the martyrdom Israel endured for so many centuries, how he was cut off from the land of the living, how his grave was made with the wicked, and his death compassed by the mighty of the earth, and how he bore it all and refused to become unfaithful to his God,—then the nations of the earth will renounce their sinfulness, and acknowledge the God of Israel as the One true God. They will say, "Israel has been wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement for our peace was upon him, and through his stripes we are healed." They will say in effect that instead of Israel being the victims of God's wrath, abandoned by the Lord as we deemed him, he was in truth wounded through our cruelty, he was bruised by our iniquitous treatment. We were permitted to afflict him thus, that by his chastisement our redemption and healing might be effected; redemption from

error and sin, healing from false belief,—for Israel was to be the teacher of mankind, the exemplar of unflinching obedience to the One God.* The prophet continues (v. 10) “yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he has put him to grief: when his soul shall make an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.” Israel shall be gloriously rewarded for the sufferings he has borne. “Through his knowledge,”—through practising and teaching the sacred lessons of his faith,—“shall my righteous servant justify many,” (*i. e.*, bring them to virtue), “for he

* *Vide* Kusari ii. §§ 34—44, where the idea of Israel's bearing the sins of the nations of the earth is fully elucidated. The Rev. Professor Leathes (in his preface to the Boyle Lectures for 1868, p. xi.) says: “In like manner assert, if you will, that the 53rd chapter of Isaiah is spoken of the nation; the assertion carries with it its own refutation. ‘The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.’ On the nation the iniquity of the nation? It is a truism. On the nation the iniquity of the race? Impossible as a fact! Impossible as the sentiment of one of the nation.” How strange, that the learned Professor should not have mentioned the obvious interpretation of the passage given by translators from the Septuagint downwards, and by a long array of commentators, from Ibn Ezra to Luzzatto. ‘On the nation Israel the sins of the nations of the earth.’

shall endure their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong," (in other words, he will be the equal of the mightiest of the earth in honour and glory), "because he has poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he endured the sin of many, and made intercession with the transgressors."* How sublime is this view of the prophet! He stands here, looking, as it were, from the summit of his prophetic intelligence upon the history of the world, and divines the future development and ultimate perfection of man—the golden age that awaits mankind when they will acknowledge the errors of which they have been guilty, tender the hand of brotherhood to redeemed Israel and acknowledge Israel's God.

And it is our duty, brethren, to labour for the speedy realization of this great future.

I ask you, my young friend, § who have this day entered into the congregation of the Lord, to show

* Isaiah liii. 12.

§ The following words were addressed to a youthful congregant, who became בר מצוה on the Sabbath, on which this Sermon was delivered.

yourself worthy of the exalted mission to which you have been appointed in common with us.

בְּדַעְתּוֹ יִצְדִּיק צַדִּיק עַבְדִּי לְרַבִּים

“By his knowledge shall my righteous servant lead many to righteousness.”* It is our mission to spread the glorious truths of Judaism by studying and practising the sacred law of God, and exhibiting the purity of its lessons to the whole world. Henceforth you are a member of the kingdom of priests, and you have heard this day the duty that is incumbent on the priests,

קֹדְשִׁים יִהְיוּ לֵאלֹהֵיהֶם וְלֹא יִחַלְלוּ שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵיהֶם

“they shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God.”§ You must be *holy* to your God, pious and pure, holy in your thoughts, holy in your words, holy in your actions. Never be guilty of aught that can bring dishonour on your religion—on your nation; remain faithful to those lessons which parents and teachers have instilled into you. Henceforth you are yourself responsible for all your actions. Glory in this responsibility. Rejoice that you hold your eternal destiny in your hand, and seek to win for yourself God’s favour while you are on earth, immortal bliss in heaven. In such effort you may

* Isaiah liii. 11.

§ Lev. xxi. 6.

be sure of divine grace and help. "The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord cause his countenance to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up His face upon thee and give thee peace." Amen.

SERMON IV.

PREACHED ON SABBATH פ' בהר ובחקת'
(MAY 16TH).

You will readily understand, my dear Brethren, that it cannot be my intention to consider *all* the passages of Scripture which are brought forward by Christian theologians in support of their dogmas. Many of the proofs that are adduced are so trivial, their refutation is so clear and self-evident,* that I do not deem it right to occupy with these the precious time that can be devoted to so many topics of paramount importance and lasting value. And it is the less necessary for me to speak to you of each and every passage, as I trust that the explanations submitted to you will indicate the method by which *all* the arguments of Christian theologians can be easily refuted.

* תשובתן בצידן (Sanhedrin 38.)

There are two rules of interpretation which I would recommend you to apply :

I. Do not trust the rendering of the disputed text given by the Anglican version, for however great may be its excellencies in point of vigour and terseness, however venerable it may be on account of its antiquity, it cannot be denied that its authors were swayed by dogmatic preconceptions. Refer, therefore, to a translation, composed by a scholar, thoroughly versed in the Hebrew tongue. But, if possible, turn to the original; examine it carefully; and you will find, that all the superstructure which had been erected upon it, however massive it may appear, will shake from its foundation, and crumble into dust. This is, in fact, the advice given by our teachers of old; whenever there arose any doubt about a passage in the Bible, they said **נִיתִי סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה**; 'Let us bring a book of the Law; let us go to the fountain head.'*

II. Do not be satisfied with examining the passage as it stands by itself, but refer carefully to its context **שְׁפִיל לְסִיפִי דְקָרָא**, 'turn to the conclusion of the verse.'§

* Sabbath p. 49, Kiddushin, p. 30. § Berachoth p. 10.

In illustration of these rules, I call your attention to a text in the Book of Deuteronomy, chap. xviii., 15, running thus:—**נָבִיא מִקִּרְבְּךָ**
מֵאַחֶיךָ כָּמֹנִי יָקִים לְךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵלָיו תִּשְׁמָעוּן :
 “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken.”

Now, Christians of every shade of opinion refer to this verse as a convincing argument that the Nazarene was the Messiah, whose revelation was to abrogate that of Moses. “Observe,” says one of their principal commentators (Matthew Henry), “what it is that is here promised, concerning our Messiah. First, that there should come a prophet, great among all the prophets, by whom God would make known Himself and His will to the children of man more fully and clearly than He had ever done before. Secondly, that God would raise him up from the midst of them. In his birth he should be one of that nation, in his resurrection he should be raised up at Jerusalem, and from thence his doctrine should go forth to all the world.”

We cannot admit this interpretation to be correct or legitimate. The prediction in question can by no possibility be construed to refer to the

coming of a Messiah. In accordance with our second rule, let us look at the verse that follows. "According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying: Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not." These words clearly indicate the sense of the passage. The Israelites, overwhelmed by the Divine appearance in thunder and fire, amid the sound of trumpets and the smoking mount, conscious as they were of their own littleness and sinfulness compared with God's grandeur, holiness and omnipotence, had asked in fear and trembling that they might never again behold the Divine Glory, and begged that Moses might henceforth announce to them the will of God. "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."*

What then was the subject of Israel's request? They did not ask for a redeemer to save their souls or to go forth to give light unto the heathens; they did not ask for a *mediator* to die for their sins, and to atone for

* Ex. xx. 19.

the original sin of Adam, but simply for one or more persons (human beings) to communicate unto them the Divine Will. They asked for a teacher, and a teacher was vouchsafed to them. "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee; I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." (verse 18).

Again, in the same chapter, Moses exhorts* the people that they should themselves neither practise, nor listen to those who practised, divination. "For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearken unto observers of times and unto diviners: but as for thee the Lord thy God has not suffered thee so to do." And why were they commanded not to hearken to diviners? Because God had given them, and would continue to give them, true prophets. § "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee . . ." Can this prediction, then, refer to the Nazarene?

* Deut. xviii. 9-14.

§ *Vide* רש"י *ad locum* לא כן נתן לך ה' אלהיך לשמוע אל מעוננים ואל קוסמים שהרי השרה שכניה על הנביאים ואורים ותומים:

Could his appearance, two thousand years later, be a sufficient reason that they should not hearken to diviners in Canaan? Moses evidently alludes to a line of prophets who, after him, should exhort, teach and admonish in the name of the Lord. He speaks of Joshua, the Godfearing warrior; of Samuel, the high-minded, unselfish judge; of Elijah, inspired with fiery zeal in the service of his Master; of Elisha, the mild and placid; of Isaiah, eminent for his burning eloquence and fervid piety; of the ardent Jeremiah, 'the man of sorrows,' who witnessed that desolation of the holy city which Moses had foretold; and of Malachi, the last of the prophets, who in his concluding message exhorted the people to remain steadfast to the Law of Moses.

It is true that the word נָבִיא 'prophet' is in the singular. But we very often find the singular used for the plural in Hebrew.*

It has been asked, how could Moses say "a prophet *like unto me*," when in another part of the Bible we read 'there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses.'† But the word

* Compare Genesis xiii. 7—Eccles. iii. 17., vii. 26.

† Deut. xxxiv. 10.

כְּמֹשֶׁה signifies similarity in some, though not in all, qualities. Every prophet who speaks by God's direction is a prophet 'like unto Moses,' though the Lord may not speak with him 'face to face'; though He may not make him the instrument to perform such marvellous signs and wonders. These words clearly tell us, that none of the future prophets were to be divinities who from their very nature would be exempt from sin and falsehood. They were all to be raised up from among Moses' brethren; they were all to be human beings like unto him. "But the prophet who shall presume to speak a word in my name which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die."* Now I boldly challenge every professor of the Christian faith to tell me where it is stated that the prophet, like unto Moses, was to declare a new revelation. On the contrary, the Law given on Sinai is here distinctly declared to be the standard of the truth or falsehood of every future prophet. §

My second illustration is a verse which you

* Deut. xviii, 20. § For the further discussion of this argument *vide* Sermon xii.

will often see quoted in Christian tracts, which is often referred to in the so-called New Testament, and used by missionary clergymen in sermons intended to open the eyes of Jewish "unbelievers." This verse, which at first sight seems startling to the unwary, is as follows:—"They shall look upon *Me* whom they have pierced." (Zech. xii. 10). Christian theologians assert that the prophet here announces the advent of a time when the children of Israel shall acknowledge their Saviour, and feel sorrow and compunction for having caused his death. Now this is a striking example of the fact I before mentioned, how a verse is quoted without the slightest reference either to its context or to its grammatical construction.

The prophet is here speaking of the future time (predicted also by Ezekiel) when many nations of the world would undertake a campaign against Jerusalem, and strike terror and fear into its inhabitants. "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about" (v. 2). But when this end has been attained, the Lord will mercifully shield and protect his people. "In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem and I will seek to destroy all the nations

that come against Jerusalem" (verses 8, 9). Israel shall go forth from the campaign unscathed. The prophet continues (v. 10)—

וְשִׁפְכִי עַל בֵּית דָּוִיד וְעַל יוֹשֵׁב יְרוּשָׁלַם רוּחַ
חַן וְתַחֲנוּגִים וְהִבִּיטוּ אֵלַי אֶת אֲשֶׁר דָּקְרוּ וְקָפְרוּ
עָלָיו כְּמִסְפֵּד עַל הַיָּחִיד וְהָמָר עָלָיו כְּהָמָר עַל
הַבְּכוֹר :

"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look up to me for him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall weep bitterly for him as one that weepeth bitterly for his first born."

The prophet, having spoken of the protection and immunity that the children of Israel would enjoy, says, that so great would this immunity be, that if it should happen that but *one* of them be pierced in this war, they would be surprised and dismayed, they would look upon it as a humiliation, as a sign that they had forfeited the favour of heaven.

We may compare with this an incident recorded in the Book of Joshua. That pious general had become accustomed to such signal

victories, victories which had been achieved without the loss of a single man—that, when on one occasion the inhabitants of Ai had slain thirty-six of his men, he exclaimed, “Alas! O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us? O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies.”* And thus, also, when the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall see that but one of their fellow citizens has been slain, they will pray to the Lord—in the words of the text, “they shall look up to Me” **את אֱלֹהֵי דָקְרוּ** “for him[§] whom they” (the invading nations mentioned in the preceding verse) “have pierced.” The text continues, “they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall weep bitterly for him as one that weepeth bitterly for his first born.” If the meaning of this passage were, as Christian theologians contend, that the one who has been

* Joshua vii., 7, 8.

§ The words **את אֱלֹהֵי** denote the cause; compare Lev. xxvi., 35, “as long as the land lieth desolate it shall rest **את אֱלֹהֵי** **לֹא שָׁבְתָה** בשבתתֶּיכֶם *because it did not rest in your Sabbaths when ye dwelt upon it.*”

pierced is identical with him whom the Israelites will look up to, the words of the original would be **וְהָמָר עָלַי וְהָכָדָר עָלַי** “they shall mourn *for me*, they shall weep bitterly *for me*,” just as it is said **וְהִבִּיטוּ אֵלַי** “they shall look up to me,” but the words used are **וְהָכָדָר עָלָיו וְהָמָר עָלָיו** “they shall mourn *for him*, and shall weep bitterly *for him*,” shewing that the person mourned and wept for is not identical with him to whom prayer will be addressed.

Apart, however, from these arguments based on verbal criticism, the fact that must weigh with us most strongly is,—that the dogma which is alleged to be contained in the text is utterly at variance with the plain teachings of Scripture. It is asserted that Israel shall pray to that god whom they had slain, to that god who assumed the form of man and offered himself as an atonement for the sins of mankind, to that other portion of the Deity which was not invested with humanity. I ask, can a plurality be attributed to Him who has declared Himself **אֶחָד** “One and indivisible,” whose essence is complete in itself? Is not the doctrine of incarnation incompatible with the nature of Him who has pronounced Himself to be a pure invisible spirit?

“Thou canst not see my face, for no man can see me and live”* “Take ye, therefore, good heed unto yourselves, for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire.”§ The doctrine that an appeasing offering was requisite to enable the Lord to save mankind is contradicted, as I showed you last week, by the lessons of Scripture. God always announces himself as our only Redeemer and Saviour, from whom all salvation and redemption proceed. And thus we have read in this day’s Haphtorah

ה' עזי ומעזי ומגדלי גוים צרה אליך גוים יבאו מאפסי
ארץ ויאמרו אך שקר נחלו אבותינו הכל ואין בם
מועיל: היעשה-לו אדם אלהים והמה לא אלהים:

“The Lord is my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction; the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity and things wherein there is no profit. Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods?”||

* Ex. xxxii., 20.

§ Deut. iv. 15.

|| Jer. xvi. 19.

O Lord! may the time soon come when all mankind shall look unto Thee and Thee alone, when to Thee every knee shall bow, and every tongue swear fealty. Amen.

SERMON V.

PREACHED ON SABBATH **פ' נשא**
(MAY 30TH),

I RESUME my course of lectures on the reputed Christological passages of the Bible, and shall commence this morning by considering some of those passages which occur in the Psalms.

Of these, the first that I shall expound is the second Psalm, which is stated to contain a clear prediction of the opposition that the Nazarene would encounter, and the announcement of his final triumph. Great stress is particularly laid upon the fact that this Psalm declares, in unmistakable terms, that he is the "Son of God." We read in the sixth verse, **אֶסְפֶּרָה אֶל חֶק ה' אֶמַר אֵלֵי בְּנֵי אֲתָהּ
אֲנִי הַיּוֹם יִלְדֶּתִיד:**

"I will declare the decree; the Lord hath

said unto me, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." The last verse is also adduced as a powerful argument, וְשָׁקֵן בֶּר פֶּן

יֵאָנֵק וְתִאָבְדוּ דֶרֶךְ כִּי יִבְעַר כִּמְעַט אָפּוֹ :

"Kiss the son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little."

Now the first question that should be asked by an intelligent enquirer is—How do you know that these verses and these expressions refer to your Messiah? We receive no satisfactory answer—dogmatic assertions only are offered.

My dear brethren, of all the Christian doctrines which I have brought before you, and which, in the name of God's truth, I have felt myself compelled to denounce, this dogma—that the Nazarene was literally the Son of God—is surely the most monstrous, the most repugnant to reason. The All-holy God, the essence of infinite moral perfection, whom the Seraphim tremble to approach, the God so pure that "even the moon and it shineth not, yea, the stars are not pure in His sight,"* the

* Job xxv. 5.

God whom Holy Writ brings before us as exalted so infinitely high above all the imperfections inherent in man's nature, the Holy One who has said "To whom then will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal to,"* that same God is dragged down from heaven and likened unto man! That Supreme Being (I shudder while I say it), is lowered to the level of one of those deities with which the mythology of Greece peopled their Olympus—beings with the same passions and feelings as those of mankind.

I refer to a verse in the first page of the New Testament, the verse relative to the birth of the Nazarene. I will not read it in this sacred place. I cannot dwell upon the subject, I must hasten over it, as over glowing coals.

But to show you at once from this Psalm how untenable is the assumption that the son, here spoken of, is, like the Father, a portion of the Godhead, I need but refer you to the eighth verse. "Ask of Me and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Now if the son be a Divinity like the Father, and equal to Him, why need he ask that any

* Isaiah xl. 25.

favours should be granted him? Is he not omnipotent; is not the whole earth with the fulness thereof his possession?*

There is, however, nothing at all either mysterious or difficult in the expression 'the son of God.' It recurs again and again in the Bible, though in a sense differing *much* from that in which Christian theologians take it. In the fourth chapter of Exodus, 22nd verse, the Lord calls his people by that endearing name **בְּנִי בְּכֹרִי** "Israel is my son, even my first-born." That is, Israel is the nation which was the first among all generations of men to adore the Lord, and which He has, therefore, most especially taken under the wings of His protection, loving it as a father loves his first born in whom he places his entire hope and pride. Again, in Deuteronomy, § Moses, addressing the nation, says, **בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם** "Ye are the children of the Lord your God." We read in Hosea **כִּי נַעַר יִשְׂרָאֵל** "When Israel was young I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son,"—a prophecy that clearly refers to the

* עיין תשובות וקשיות שעשה רד"ק לנוצרים על קצת מזמורים

§ xiv. 1

|| xi. 1.

exodus from Egypt, and to the honourable, endearing name the Lord then gave our nation.

And how often does the Lord call Himself our

Father, הֲלוֹא הוּא אָבִיךָ קִנְךָ הוּא עָשָׂךְ וַיְכַנְנֶךָ

“Is he not thy father that hath acquired thee? Hath he not made thee and established thee?”* This is one of the most gracious

appellations by which He has made Himself known to us, telling us, that as a father He thinks of us, loves us, protects us, cares and provides for us. In Isaiah§ we read, “Doubt-

less Thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: Thou, O Lord! art our Father: our Redeemer from everlasting is Thy name.” And we pray

to Him every morning אָבִינוּ שֶׁבַשְׁמַיִם עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ חֶסֶד בְּעֵבוֹר שְׁמֶךָ הַגָּדוֹל שֶׁנִּקְרָא עָלֵינוּ :

“Our Father who art in heaven, deal with us according to Thy loving kindness, for the sake of Thy great and mighty name.” On our most

sacred days we implore Him who is אָבִינוּ מֶלֶכְנוּ

“Our Father, our King,” for pardon and forgiveness. With what possible right, then, can a whole theological system of subtilty and

* Deut. xxxii, 7. § lxiii. 16.

mystery be upraised on the use of that simple expression בְּנִי אֵתָה "Thou art my son?"

Nor is there the slightest difficulty in arriving at the true meaning of the entire psalm. It brings before us a king but just appointed to his exalted office, whose mind is penetrated with the belief, that God has raised him to his high estate. On hearing, therefore, that nations rebel against him, he is confident that they will be put to shame, and forced to acknowledge him. A few verses from the Second Book of Samuel present a clear commentary on this psalm.

We there read, how all the tribes of Israel had come to David and anointed him king; he had taken the stronghold of Zion and dwelt in it: he "went on and grew great, and the Lord God of Hosts was with him.* . . . And David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that He had exalted his kingdom for His people Israel's sake."

Further on we read, "But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek (make war upon) David . . . And David

* Chap. vii. 10, 12.

enquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? . . . And the Lord said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand."* . It was at this juncture that David most probably composed the psalm. Trusting as he did in the gracious help of Almighty God, he felt how all the machinations of his enemies would prove futile. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed."§ And the Lord laughs their vain, impotent attempt to scorn. "The Lord has said unto me, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee."

As I have already shewn you that Israel is called the Son of the Lord, you will easily understand why by the employment of the same metaphor the King of Israel as represen-

* *Ibid*: 17, 19.

§ Kings are throughout the Bible termed the 'anointed of the Lord.' Cf. I Samuel c. x. 1, xii., 3. xxiv., 7, &c. It is not necessary to defend the use of the word מָלֶכְךָ for Palestine merely on the score of its being a poetic license. In many passages מָלֶכְךָ denotes 'the land' *par excellence*. Cf. Joel I, 2. Ps. xxxvii., 9. Prov. II, 21, *vide* Gesenius' Lexicon, s. v. מָלֶכְךָ

tative of the people is pre-eminently termed the 'Son of the Lord.' In another passage* a similar expression is clearly used in reference to David, the object being to denote that he had derived the royal dignity immediately from God. "I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him. . . . He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my first born, higher than the kings of the earth."

Let us now consider the last verse of the psalm. "Kiss the son lest he be angry." How often has this passage been quoted by Christian theologians as a call to mankind to welcome the author of their faith, to submit, and to do honour to him. "If the son be angry," they say, "who shall intercede for us? There remains no more sacrifice, no other name by which we can be saved."§

Now, it is very doubtful whether נִשְׁקוּ בֶר is correctly rendered, 'Kiss the son;' for בֶר is

* Psalm lxxix. 27, 28. Cf. 2 Samuel vii. 14, where the Lord says of Solomon 'I will be his father, and he shall be my son.'

§ Commentary by Henry and Scott.

the Chaldaic not the Hebrew for the word 'son.' Many Jewish commentators* therefore render this clause, "Arm yourselves with purity." Assuming, however, that the word is to be rendered 'son' (in which sense, indeed, it is found in Proverbs),§ what possible difficulty is there in the expression 'Kiss the son?' The giving of a kiss was, in ancient times, one of the forms of doing homage. Thus Samuel, when he had poured the vial of oil upon the head of Saul, "kissed him, and said, is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over His inheritance?"|| What more natural than that this psalm should conclude with an exhortation to all the rebels to come forward without further delay to acknowledge the sovereignty of David, lest the Lord should destroy them in anger? The event predicted

* Cf. Rashi a.l. זרו עזמכם בבור לבב

§ xxxi. 2 מה ברי ומה בר בטני ומה בר נדרי 'What my son, &c.' It has been ingeniously conjectured that the Chaldaic word בר has been used in lieu of the Hebrew בן in the passage from the 2nd Psalm, because the sequence of the words בן בן would not sound euphoniously.

|| 1 Samuel x., 1, A similar custom obtained in the middle ages; the act of homage by the vassal consisted in kissing his lord.

in David's divinely inspired words came to pass. The Philistines who went forth to battle against him were utterly discomfited, and his throne was firmly established.

Must we not deplore, my brethren, that a psalm so simple, so readily intelligible, should be distorted from its obvious meaning, for the purpose of founding upon it a dogma not only incomprehensible, but, (and this is infinitely more important) a dogma irrefragably condemned as false by every word that the Bible tells us of the exalted attributes of God !

I now ask you to turn to the twenty-second psalm, commencing, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my lamentation?" This psalm is frequently referred to as containing a very distinct and minute account of the sufferings which the Nazarene was to endure (an account similar to that found in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah.) "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men and despised of the people" (v. 6.) Then the taunts of his enemies are mentioned; "He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver him: let Him deliver him, seeing that He delighted in him."

(v. 8.) The 17th verse* is alleged to fore-shadow expressly the so-called 'passion,' the sufferings he was to endure, and to predict clearly his crucifixion "For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; *they pierced* my hands and my feet." And the conclusion of the psalm is supposed to predict his exaltation, and the general recognition of his teachings. "All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee," (verse 28).

Rabbi David Kimchi, in the work before quoted, adduces a number of powerful arguments against this interpretation, and shows how nearly every verse of the psalm would, according to the Christian exposition, involve some incongruity. I will only dwell upon this one point. The very corner-stone of Christianity is that its founder voluntarily offered himself as an expiation for the sins of mankind, that he voluntarily elected to perish. How is it, then, that in this psalm he expresses his great anxiety to be delivered? With what object does he lament "Why art thou so far from helping me, and

* In the Hebrew editions, the 16th in the Anglican version.

from the words of my lamentation?" If he had been delivered, the whole scheme of the salvation of mankind, according to the Christian doctrine, would have been frustrated.

Besides this, however, there is a remarkable fact connected with the 17th verse above quoted

בִּי סָבְבוּ נְלָבִים עַד־תִּמְרָעִים
הַקִּיפוּנִי כְאֶרֶץ יְדֵי וְרַגְלֵי :

"For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: *they pierced* my hands and my feet." In the marginal notes of the authorized version, no less than six references are given to the 'New Testament.' But if we turn to the Hebrew original, we look in vain for a word corresponding to 'they pierced.' The text has כְּאֶרֶץ "like a lion." This is the reading given in all editions, but for this word the verb כָּאֵרַץ, which is translated 'they pierced,' is substituted. Now, I will not accuse the Christian translators of a wilful falsification of the text, but I will read to you as a curiosity one sentence of Henry's commentary: "By the change of a letter, most Hebrew copies of the psalms read, 'like a lion,' instead of that which no doubt is the true reading, 'they pierced.'" I have only to observe on

this that there does not exist a Hebrew copy which has the reading **כְּאֵרִי** instead of **כְּאֵרִי***

These verbal disquisitions, however, must appear almost puerile and unnecessary, seeing that the true sense of the psalm is apparent and simple. It contains no prophecy, no prefiguration, nothing that is typical. It is obvious that the writer must have suffered and experienced that which he here describes. The psalm, indeed, was composed by David, when hunted by Saul 'like a partridge upon the mountains;' when the king and his soldiery had 'compassed David and his men round

* I subjoin the opinions of two eminent Christian commentators on the Psalms. Hengstenberg, the author of 'The Christology of the O. T.,' says in his 'Commentary on the Psalms' on this passage "If we pay regard to external evidence there can be no doubt that **כְּאֵרִי** is the true reading; and it would be to abandon all sound principles of criticism, were we to reject it, and to substitute instead of it with Ewald, the reading **כְּאֵרִי**. The external evidence for the other readings is as good as nought. Rev. Mr. Perowne says in his commentary, 'The MSS almost without exception, have the present masoretic reading, either **כְּאֵרִי** or **כְּאֵרִי** like a lion.' Some of the MSS of the Targum in Antwerp Polyp have **כְּאֵרִי**. In only two genuine Jewish MSS do we find **כְּאֵרִי**, but in one of these (Ken. 39) it would seem that the , has been altered into **כְּאֵרִי** and the other (De Rossi 337) has **כְּאֵרִי** a union of both readings. The principal reason why Mr. Perowne gives up the reading **כְּאֵרִי** is, because 'like a lion' would not suit the context so well as 'they pierced.'

about to take them;* when David had scarcely any hope of escape; when there was but one step betwixt him and death.

I refer you to the narrative contained in the First Book of Samuel (chaps. xxiii.—xxvi.), which forms the best and most explicit commentary on this psalm. By a striking oriental figure, David represents himself as a carcass attacked by a lion, by bulls and by dogs (verses 12 and 17), who are busied in tearing the flesh from his bones, their teeth being fixed in his hands and feet. The lion is Saul; the bulls and dogs are his cruel soldiers, fulfilling the behests of their heartless master. With this explanation, the reading of the seventeenth verse becomes very simple. “For dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; like a lion (they tear) my hands and my feet.” We may compare with the word כְּאֵרִי “like a lion” used here, similar expressions, אֶרֶיָה טֹרֵף וְשֹׁאֵן “as a ravening and a roaring lion,” and הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי מִפִּי אֶרֶיָה “Save me from the lion’s mouth,” used in the 14th and 22nd verses.‡

* I Samuel xxiii., 26.

‡ Rashi points out a parallel passage in the prayer of Hezekiah (Isaiah xxxviii. 13.) בָּאֵרִי כֵן יִשְׁבֵּר כָּל עֲצָמוֹתַי

This psalm, like many others, contains two leading ideas : first, the depth of misery into which the minstrel has fallen, and the imminence of the danger that threatens him ; secondly, the hope in his deliverance, the confidence in a better future, the certainty that righteousness and justice must ultimately prevail over hatred and wickedness. The psalmist, with that genius of universality inherent in all great minds, utters words for the consolation and edification of all men, whilst pouring out his own grief and sorrow. This is so clear and apparent that the more enlightened of Christian expositors no longer claim this psalm as a prediction of the sufferings their master was to endure. Even Hengstenberg, who wrote a work of many volumes on the Christology of the Old Testament, has abandoned this interpretation. And it is also a noteworthy fact that the authorized version contains the following headings to this psalm, which are perfectly correct : “ David complaineth in great discouragement. He prayeth in great distress. He praiseth God.”

“ That, as a lion, so will he break all my bones.” Cf. Psalm vii. 3. פֶּן יִסְרֹף כְּאַרְיֵה נַפְשִׁי “ Lest he tear my soul like a lion.”

Next Sabbath I propose to treat of the 110th psalm ; and I have no doubt but that, after hearing my explanation of it, you and every unbiassed critic will agree with me, that the “dry bones” of dogmatic theology which Christian expositors would fain discover, are not enshrined in the Book of Psalms. No, brethren, far nobler are its contents ; there we find the thrilling language of religious emotion, now tender, as soft breathing music, now sublime and soul-stirring as the roar of the mighty torrent, but ever purifying and elevating the human heart—language which has rendered this book the everlasting Psalmody of mankind !

SERMON VI.

PREACHED ON SABBATH פ' בהעלותך (JUNE 6th).

לָדָד מִזְמוֹר נָאֵם ה' לְאֹדְנִי שֵׁב לִימִינִי עַד-
אֲשִׁית אֲבִיד הָדָם לְרִגְלֶיךָ : מָטָה עֶזְךָ יִשְׁלַח ה'
מִצִּיּוֹן רֹדֶה בְּקֶרֶב אֲבִיד : עֶמְךָ נִדְבַת בְּיוֹם חִילֶךָ
בְּהַדְרֵי־קֶדֶשׁ מִדָּחִם מִשְׁחָר לָךְ מִלְּיָדְתְּךָ : גִּשְׁבַּע
ה' וְלֹא יָנַחם אֶת־הַכֹּהֵן לְעוֹלָם עַל־דְּבָרְתִי מִלְכֵי-
אֲדָם : אֹדְנִי עַל־יְמִינְךָ מִחֵץ בְּיוֹם־אָפוּ מְלָכִים :
יָרִין בְּגוֹיִם מָלֵא גִּוִּיּוֹת מִחֵץ רֹאשׁ עַל־אֶרֶץ רָבָה :
מִגִּחַל בְּרִכְךָ יִשְׁתָּה עַל־כֵּן יָרִים רֹאשׁ :

Psalm CX.

“A PSALM unto David. The Eternal saith unto my lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion : rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy

people shall be willing in the day of thy power in holy beauty: out of the bosom of the morning dawn (floweth)* unto thee the dew of thy youth. The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath. He shall judge among the heathen; He shall fill the places with the dead bodies; He shall crush the heads in the land of Rabbah. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head."

There is scarcely another passage in the Bible which, as I gather from the marginal references of the Anglican version, is more frequently quoted, or rather echoed in the New Testament, than this.† It is asserted by the Christians that it contains three distinct predictions concerning the Nazarene. The first verse is translated, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand." Hence it is inferred, that David,

* I have rendered this difficult verse according to Dr. Sach's translation.

† Compare Hengstenberg's "Commentary on the Book of Psalms."

in predicting the appearance of the Nazarene, already acknowledged his divinity, and called him "Lord." He is to "sit at the right hand of God;" this expression is alleged to signify that he shall have dominion in heaven and on earth. Then his priestly vocation as mediator is believed to be declared in the words "thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." The expression "until I make thine enemies thy footstool" is supposed by Christians to imply that eventually Israel, and all the nations of the world that now withhold their allegiance, shall submit themselves to him.

That this psalm at first sight seems difficult and enigmatic, I admit, but not that it favours, in the slightest degree, the construction placed upon it by Christian theologians—a construction which, as I shall immediately show you, is quite untenable. The reason for this obscurity lies in the fact that, unlike other psalms, it is of the nature of an oracular or prophetic communication. The expression *אֵלֹהִים* "the Lord says," (which is peculiar to, and occurs continually in, the prophetical books of the Bible), is to be found in no other psalm. It is no wonder, then, that this hymn, written as it is, with great poetical power, and couched in lyrical

brevity and succinctness, should contain many obscure phrases, which almost seem to defy explanation.

Before attempting to solve these difficulties, let me show you the impossibility of accepting the Christian interpretation of the psalm. The assertion that the first verse declares the divinity of the Nazarene, rests on a mistranslation. The words of the text are not 'The Eternal speaks,' לְאֵלֵינוּ יְיָ (unto *the Lord* (יְיָ being the word that is often used in the Bible to express the Deity,) but לְאֵדֵינוּ 'unto *my lord*,' 'my master,' אֲדֹנָי being a word that simply denotes superiority.

"Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies my footstool." If this expression be taken in its literal sense, we should be ascribing corporeality to that Being who is incorporeal and wholly spiritual. But, throughout the Bible, the metaphor, 'the right hand of God,' signifies the omnipotence of the Deity. Thus, we read, "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power."* "The right hand of the Lord is exalted."§ This expression would be perfectly

* Ex. xv. 6. § Psalm cxviii. 16.

applicable to one who needs Divine aid, but it is totally inappropriate when used in reference to one who is worshipped as a Divinity.

“Thou shalt be a priest for ever;”—the word ‘priest’ is taken literally, and the verse is adduced to show that the priesthood of this Messiah was to take the place of Aaron’s priesthood. Now ‘priest’ signifies one who performs divine service and offers sacrifices. But sacrifices are offered to a God. To whom, then, shall the Deity bring sacrifices? To Himself? Nay more; numerous passages in the so-called New Testament distinctly declare the Nazarene to be the sin-offering, by whose blood the sins of the world are to be atoned. Hence, one and the same person is the victim that is offered, the high priest who offers it, and the Deity to whom it is offered!

The concluding verses speak of battles that will be fought by the personage to whom this psalm is addressed, and of kings whom he will crush. No record, however, exists of battles which the Nazarene fought.

The last verse says, “he shall drink of the brook in the way.” What possible application can this expression have to him? The com-

mentary of Henry and Scott on this passage is as follows :—

“ We have here the Redeemer saving his friends and comforting them for their benefit. He shall be humbled, he shall drink of the brook in the way, of that bitter cup the Father put into his hand. The wrath of God, running in the curse of the law, may be considered as the brook in the way of his undertaking.” These are words, my dear brethren, but do they convey any sense ?*

It is not sufficient, however, to point out absurdities and errors. To answer the arguments of the opponents of Judaism conclusively, it becomes my duty to give a satisfactory explanation of the Psalm.

* While I was preparing these sermons for the press, the Boyle lectures for 1868, by the Rev. Stanley Leathes, A.M., came under my notice. He explains the verse thus : “ He was to ‘ drink of the brook in the way ’ that other men drink of, being made in all things like unto his brethren ; standing in need, like them, of the common wants of life, and receiving, like them, refreshment from the common supply—the ever-open fountain of the grace of God.” This explanation conveys more sense than that quoted above ; but it surely is not in tenour with the description given in the preceding verses of a victorious general, ‘ whose hands have struck through kings, and filled the places with dead bodies.’

It must first be noted that most probably the heading לְדָוִד מִמֶּמֶר does not signify a Psalm of David but *for* (*concerning*) David.* A similar usage is to be met with in the 72nd Psalm, which is headed לְשִׁלְמֹה and commences 'Give the king thy judgments, O Lord.' This heading is not translated in the authorized version, 'A Psalm of,' but correctly '*for* Solomon.' There are many other Psalms in which David does not speak of himself in the first person, but is either addressed in the second, or spoken of in the third person. Thus, the 20th Psalm commences, "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble;" the 21st, "The king shall joy in Thy strength, O Lord§."

The purport of the Psalm under discussion is to declare that the Lord had appointed and consecrated David king, and that He would render him victorious over his enemies. There is

* For this use of the particle לְ compare Gen. xx. 13, אָמַרְתִּי לִי 'Say of me.'

§ In the celebrated disputation, which was held by Nachmanides (at Barcelona), with Frà Paolo, in the presence of the King of Arragon, the learned Rabbi accounts for the use of the second person by the fact, that the psalm was composed by David, to be sung by the Levites.

every internal evidence to show that it was composed on the eve of a war, and the mention of the land of Rabbah (v. 6) clearly indicates against whom this war was to be waged, viz., the Ammonites, who had offered indignities to David's messenger. The history of this war is related in the second Book of Samuel (chs. x-xii), from which I will quote a few verses:—"And it came to pass at the return of the year, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah (their capital). But David tarried still at Jerusalem (xi. 1)." We read further on (xii. 26-28), "And Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city (the castle, or citadel). And Joab sent messengers to David and said, I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters (the conduit of water, that supplied the city). Now, therefore, gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it: lest I take the city and it be called after my name."

With these facts before us, all difficulties vanish. As the king goes forth to battle, the

spirit of God rests upon one of the inspired minstrels at the royal court, and he proclaims, 'The Eternal saith unto my lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies my footstool.' This is but a slightly varied form of the expression in the 5th verse "The Lord at thy right hand, &c.," and which occurs also in other portions of the Book of Psalms, *e.g.*, "I have set the Lord always before me ; because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved."* The phrase denotes that the Lord would send David His gracious help until his enemies should have been finally subdued. The Psalmist then foretells that in the expedition which David is about to undertake, his arms will be crowned with complete success. "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion ; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." The poet pictures the king going forth to battle surrounded by his youthful warriors, as bright and as numerous as the dewdrops on a summer's morn, and willing to shed their heart's blood in his service. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in holy beauty ; out of the bosom of the morning dawn, the dew of thy youth floweth unto thee."

* Psalm xvi. 8.

And then the Psalmist proclaims, in solemn tones, how firmly David's sovereignty will be established. "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent **אַתָּה-כֹּהֵן לְעוֹלָם עַל דְּבָרִי מֶלְכִי-צֶדֶק** Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Although the word **כֹּהֵן** generally signifies "priest," we also find it applied to a ruler and prince. Thus **וּבְנֵי דָוִד כֹּהֲנִים הָיוּ** is translated in the Anglican version, "David's sons were chief rulers."* The first part of the verse should be rendered then "Thou art a ruler for ever." This expression signifies that, unlike Saul whose brief authority was taken away from him, by reason of his unfitness and disobedience, David's own reign should be of long duration and his dynasty lasting; for his children were to sit on their father's throne, and a scion of his royal house was to be Israel's redeemer in future time.

The next part of the verse, "After the order of Melchizedek," may be thus explained. In all probability, Melchizedek is here named because he was the first king mentioned by Scripture as having reigned in Jerusalem, where

* II Samuel' viii. 18. Cf. I. Chron., xviii. 17.

David had fixed his throne. There is undoubtedly also a deeper meaning in these solemn words; they proclaim David to have been the worthy head of a people whose mission it was to become a kingdom of priests. They tell us that his life was devoted to the adoration and praise of God, even as was the life of Melchizedek, who, living amidst an idolatrous people, worshipped the Most High. And David proved himself worthy of this appellation by the deep and absorbing interest he evinced in promoting public Divine worship.*

The poet, then, in more accurate terms, predicts the success with which the king's expedition will be crowned. "The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath he crushes heads over the land of Rabbah" (*i.e.* the territory surrounding Rabbah, the capital of the Ammonites). This rendering of אֶרֶץ רַבָּה is in accordance with the original; the Anglican version, "over many countries," would only be correct if the text stood אֶרְצוֹת רַבּוֹת

"He shall drink of the brook in the way,

* *Vide* I Chron., xxi., xxvi., xxviii., xxix.

therefore shall he lift up the head." It almost seems as if this verse were purposely placed here to show how absurd it is to refer this Psalm to a Messiah of whom it is to be understood literally that he would sit at the right hand of God. Why should he need to drink of the brook in the way? With our acceptance of the psalm, however, it will be seen that this verse is quite appropriate. One of the greatest dangers which threatened warriors in the East was lack of water; one of the greatest hardships they had to endure was the fearful thirst they suffered after the fatigues of battle. Thus we read of Samson, after he had slain the Philistines: "and he was sore athirst, and called on the Lord, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of Thy servant: and now shall I die of thirst, and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?"* And, by a miracle, water suddenly appeared, "and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived." We also read of David, how, when he was encamped against the Philistines, he longed and said, "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem."§ Now, in

* Judges xv. 18.

§ II Samuel xxiii. 15.

this psalm, the poet adds, as a not unworthy pendant to the success that would attend David, that, during the fatigue he would have to undergo while pursuing the enemy, God would provide him a brook by the way, to quench the thirst of himself and his army, so that they might achieve a complete victory. And we shall be the less surprised at this conclusion of the psalm, if we call to mind how much of the brilliant success that attended our recent campaign in Abyssinia was due to the admirable manner in which our troops were supplied with water.

The prophecy was fulfilled. Holy Writ relates,* “and David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it.”

My exposition of the psalm is ended. And now I ask you to judge whether the explanation I have given does not at once sweep away the dogmatic cobwebs with which this psalm has been covered in the process of ages? § Oh,

* II Samuel xii. 29.

§ It is unintelligible to me how the Rev. Mr. Leathes can say (in the work which I have previously quoted) that “there is no one event of David’s life to which, with the smallest amount of probability, we can assign this psalm.”

וּבִלְעָ בָהֶר הַזֶּה פָּנָי
 הַלֹּט הַלֹּט עַל כָּל הָעַמִּים וְהַמַּסְכָּה הַנְּסוּכָה עַל
 כָּל הַגּוֹיִם “when the Lord will destroy the face
 of the covering cast over all people, and the
 veil that is spread over all nations” *—the veil
 of error and false belief! The time will come!
Magna est veritas et prævalebit. TRUTH IS
 MIGHTY: IT WILL, IT MUST PREVAIL!

* Isaiah xxv. 7.

SERMON VII.

PREACHED ON SABBATH פ' שלח לך
(JUNE 13TH).

I PROPOSE in my discourse of to-day to explain a passage in the book of Daniel. But before commencing my exposition, I wish to call your attention to a curious instance of the extreme lengths to which Christian theologians go, in founding their dogmas upon the Bible. Could there be a simpler verse than that of Ecclesiastes, (iv. 12), **וְהָיוּ הַמִּשְׁלָשׁ לֹא בְמַהֲרָה יִנָּתֵק**, “and a threefold cord is not quickly broken”? Some days ago, our revered Chief Rabbi received a letter from a brother in faith, dwelling in a small town in West Canada, the only Jew in the town, stating that this verse had been

brought under his notice by a clergyman, as containing an unanswerable confirmation of the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity. And the poor man, astounded and bewildered, earnestly implored that the true signification of the verse might be explained to him.

Surely of all the distortions and perversions to which the Sacred Text has been subjected, this is one of the most glaring. Who would imagine a subtle theological dogma to lie hidden in these simple words? Nothing can be clearer than their plain sense.

It must be borne in mind that, in the immediately preceding passages, Solomon has been speaking of the folly and wretchedness of the solitary miser. "There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he has neither child nor brother: yet there is no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good?" (v. 8). He then proceeds to show the advantages of friendship and mutual assistance. "Two are better than one for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow, but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up." (verses 9, 10).

He gives another instance : suppose a robber comes to attack them, the two together will easily overcome him, “ and if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him.” A union of three, the Preacher continues, is still more advantageous, “ and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” More simple or intelligible language could scarcely be found, to inculcate a practical moral lesson. And yet it is pretended that this passage contains an enunciation of the doctrine of the Trinity!

As I am on this topic, I will mention incidentally two other passages of the Bible that are adduced in support of the same doctrine. The prophet Isaiah says, (xlviii. 16), **וַעֲתָה ה' אֱלֹהִים, שְׁלַחְנִי וְרוּחוֹ** : this is translated in the version, “ And now the Lord God, and His spirit hath sent me.” The three expressions, ‘Lord, God, and His Spirit,’ are believed by our opponents to refer to the three persons of whom, according to Christian teaching, the Godhead consists.

Matthew Henry comments on this verse as follows : “ The Spirit of God is here spoken of as a person distinct from the Father and Son, having Divine authority to send prophets.”

This proof, if proof it can be called, rests on a mistranslation. For the text has not ה' אֱלֹהִים וְרוּחוֹ שְׁלַחוּנִי of which the above would be a correct translation, but ה' אֱלֹהִים שְׁלַחֲנִי וְרוּחוֹ which should be rendered, "and now the Lord God has sent me and his spirit"; i.e., (as Kimchi explains): "When the Lord God appointed me to my exalted mission, He inspired me with a prophetic spirit."*

A similar use is made of a passage in the thirtieth chapter of Proverbs, 4th verse. "Who hath ascended into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?" Listen to the remarks of the Christian commentator on this verse. "The Messiah is here spoken of as a person distinct from the Father. There is a prophetic intimation of him who came down from heaven to be our instructor and our saviour, and then ascended to heaven to be our advocate. The verse contains a clear intimation of the first and

* וְרוּחוֹ שֶׁם בִּקְרִי לַהֲתַנְבֵּא עֲתִידוֹת Cf Isaiah lxi.1.

second persons in the Trinity ; it is a natural and unforced interpretation suitable to the context."

I ask you to judge, my dear brethren, whether it be so? Let us refer to the context. Agur, of whom nothing further is mentioned in Scripture, is speaking of the ignorance, the fallibility of man's intellect, as contrasted with Divine Omniscience. "I neither learned wisdom nor have the knowledge of the holy (v. 3)." Is there one, he asks, who has ever rivalled the works of the Most High? "Who has ascended to heaven or descended? Who has gathered the winds in his fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?" No human being has assisted in the formation of the several elements; God's omnipotence is unapproachable. "Thus, says the Lord thy Redeemer, and He that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord who make all things, who stretch forth the heavens alone, who spread abroad the earth by myself."* The words, "what is his son's name," are specially introduced to contrast the human with the Divine Being.

* Isaiah xliv. 24.

These are mere verbal disquisitions. But in condemnation of all sophistical arguments extracted from a few, and I am almost tempted to add, garbled passages,—arguments by which attempts are made to prop up the doctrine of the Trinity, there towers in might superior to them all, that one firm rock, against which the billows of cavil and controversy dash in vain, the grand verse:—

שִׁמְעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד : “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Eternal Being.* And this truth is echoed throughout the Bible, “I am the Lord: that is My name, and My glory I will not give to another.”§ Aye, no more appropriate words could be addressed to our brethren of another faith than those which follow the verse quoted above from the Book of Proverbs, (xxx. 5, 6): “Every word of God is pure; He is a shield unto those who put their trust in Him. Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found an utterer of falsehood.”

I now proceed to consider the predictions that are contained in the Book of Daniel. We shall

* Deut. vi. 4. § Isaiah xlii. 8.

meet with some difficulty in endeavouring to arrive at their meaning. This difficulty however, does not arise from the passages favouring in the remotest degree the explanation given of them by Christian expositors, but is owing to the circumstance that all the portions of the Book of Daniel not purely historical, are very obscure, and contain enigmas which require another Daniel for their solution. This obscurity is due to the fact that the predictions are not direct prophecies like those of Isaiah or Jeremiah, but visions. Daniel, though inspired by רוח הקדש the holy spirit, was not gifted with רוח הנבואה the spirit of prophecy; and his book is therefore classed among the כתובים (the holy writings) and not among the נביאים (the prophets)*.

Two passages in this book will be brought under your notice. I propose considering this morning two verses (13th and 14th) of the seventh chapter, which run thus:—

חֹזֶה הָיִית בְּחֻזִּי לִלְאִי וְאִרְוֶה עִם עַנְנֵי שָׁמַיָא כְּבֹר
אֲנִי אֲתָה הָיָה וְעַד עֵתִיק יֻמְיָא מְטָה וְקִדְמוּהִי

* Megilla p. 3 Vide Maimonides מורה נבוכים
מאמר ב' פרק מ"ה

הִקְרַבְתִּי : וְלֹא יָהֵב שְׁלֹמֹן וְיִקְרַר וּמִלְכּוֹ וְכָל עַמִּי
 אֲמִי וְלִשְׁנָיָה לֵּה יִפְלְחוּן שְׁלֹמֹה שְׁלֹמֹן עֲלֵם
 דִּי לֹא יַעֲרֶה וּמִלְכּוּתָהּ דִּי לֹא תִתְחַבֵּל :

“I saw in the night visions, and behold one like a son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, and nations and languages should serve him : his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

Many Christian expositors contend that Daniel here alludes to the coming of the Nazarene and asserts his Divine origin. They support this allegation by arguing that if he had been merely a human being, it would not be stated here that he would come with the clouds of heaven.

It is not difficult to show that this argument is futile. We must bear in mind that a prophetic dream is here recorded by Daniel, who is ‘seeing in a night vision.’ Just as in the same chapter, four beasts are represented as coming up from the sea, so the son of man

appears to Daniel as coming with the clouds of heaven. Now, who is this 'son of man'? For an answer to this question, I will not appeal to any commentator; I need not ask you to thread your way through the mazy intricacies which the interpretations present, but I refer you to Daniel himself. Just as he explains that by the four beasts, four great kingdoms are to be understood, so he tells us what the appearance of the son of man denotes. He says, in the 27th verse, which contains expressions very similar to the passage in dispute :

וּמַלְכוּתָא וְשִׁלְטָנָא וְרִבּוּתָא : דִּי מַלְכּוּת תַּחֲזוּת
 קַל שְׁמַיָּא יְהִיבַת לְעַם קַדִּישִׁי עֲלִיּוֹנִין מַלְכוּתִיהָ
 מַלְכוּת עַלְמָא וְכָל שְׁלִטְנֵיָא לֵהּ יִפְלַחוּן (וְיִשְׁתַּמְעוּן :

“And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to *the people of the saints of the Most High*, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey it.” It is clear from these words, that by the term ‘son of man,’ a people—and not an individual—is to be understood, precisely as the four beasts signify, not four creatures, but, four kingdoms. Now, to what people is reference made? Its title gives us the clue. It is called in the text

עַם קְדִישׁ עֲלִיוֹן 'the people of the saints of the Most High.' This is the appellation which is given throughout the Bible to the people Israel. It was declared on Sinai that it should be part of Israel's mission to become עַם קְדִישׁ a holy people.* Moses said unto them בִּי עַם קְדִישׁ אַתָּה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God." § In Isaiah we read וְקָרְאוּ לָהֶם עַם הַקִּדְשׁ "And they shall call them the holy people||."

In the same manner as the sovereignty of the Gentile nations is symbolized by the several beasts—the lion, bear, leopard, and the terrible iron-toothed beast, so the people of the Most High is appropriately typified by the form of a son of man. Israel is not represented as a brute animal; such a description would have placed him on an equality with heathen nations; he does not appear in the guise of an angel, because he has not divested himself of his earthly nature, but he is represented in the dignified form of a human being, to indicate that by his knowledge and adoration of the one true God, he is highly exalted above the nations of the world, who are only intent on conquest and self-ag-

* Ex. xix, 6. § Deut. xiv. 2. || Isaiah lxii. 12.

grandizement. The beasts come up from the great sea, upon which the four winds of heaven are striving—a figure which denotes the earth and its inhabitants disturbed by the schemes of ambitious princes and mighty conquerors. ‘The son of man comes with the clouds of heaven’; that is to say, not by human power, and human might, but by the decree and will of heaven.

I will not enter into the vexed question, as to which are the four kingdoms typified by the four beasts. Very probably, they are the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Macedonian, and Roman empires. But whether this be the true solution or not, the fact at all events is here clearly foretold, that the time will come when the dominion of error and false belief and the rule of physical brute force, the **שעבוד מלכות** will cease;* when the religion of Israel, the recognition and worship of the Most High, will be the religion of the world: when Israel shall become worthy of maintaining its spiritual supremacy over mankind. Truly a noble and sublime future destiny, to which we may all

* Berachoth p. 34, Sabbath p. 63.

confidently look forward, for which we must one and all prepare ourselves.

I beseech you, my young friend,* who have this day entered the congregation of Israel, to strive to become worthy of the great future that still awaits our race. There is a well-known adage, 'Noblesse oblige.' 'Rank imposes obligations.' And surely great obligations are imposed upon you by your exalted rank, as one of the people of the saints of the Most High, **עַם קְדִישִׁי עֲלִיוֹן**, as one of the nation which has been appointed to proclaim to the world the belief in the Unity of God—as a member of that race which has been ordained to be the custodian of the Divine Law. You know those sacred obligations—to study in the original that Torah which was first revealed to us, and to show forth to the world the purifying and humanizing influences which its lessons exercise upon us. Do not neglect the golden opportunities, of which you can now avail yourself, to gain precious knowledge; or, when it is too late, you will bitterly deplore the fair occasions gone for ever by.

Now is the time when the first fruits should ripen, when you should make noble and pious

* Addressed to a **בֶּר מצוה**

resolves to lead a God-fearing and virtuous life!

וְהִתְחַזְקֶתֶם וּלְקַחְתֶּם מִפְּרִי הָאָרֶץ

“Be of good courage, and take of the fruit of the land.” Hearken to the lessons of your teachers, and impress them upon your memory, so that you may become a source of true joy to your parents, and worthy of the blessings of the Most High. “The Lord bless thee and keep thee: the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” Amen.

SERMON VIII.

PREACHED ON SABBATH פ' קרח

(JUNE 20TH).

I DOUBT whether there are any other passages of Scripture on which so much has been written as on the last four verses of the ninth chapter of Daniel. "Some of the most profound intellects which ever existed—scholars, theologians, philologists, mathematicians. and historians—have tested their powers in endeavours to interpret Daniel's prophecy of the Seventy Weeks."* Not merely Jewish commentators,§ but a host of Christian authors have expended their ingenuity on this passage. Even the great Newton

* Bosanquet's 'Messiah the Prince.'

§ Rashi, R. Saadiah, Abravanel, Joseph ibn Jachja, Asariah de Rossi, &c.

wrote a treatise, at the commencement of the last century, on the “Weeks of Daniel;” and, in modern times, Bible critics have devoted an immense amount of zeal and ability to the exposition of this prophecy*. For myself, it has not been an easy task to go through the mass of interpretation which these few verses have called forth. But you need not fear that I am about to bewilder you with the various calculations that have been proposed by way of exposition. I shall treat the subject in as simple a manner as possible, and, after first proving to you that the Christian interpretation of this passage is untenable, I will submit to you its probable signification.

We read, at the commencement of the chapter, that Daniel is endeavouring to understand “the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he

* The following are some of the principal: — Lengerke, Hitzig, Ewald, Auberlen, Doctor Pusey (‘Lectures on Daniel the Prophet,’) Mr. Desprez (‘Treatise on Daniel,’ or ‘the Apocalypse of the Old Testament,’ with an introduction by Dr. Williams), the Duke of Manchester (‘The Times of Daniel,’) and Mr. Bosanquet (‘Messiah the Prince.’) Bagnage has also written a long dissertation on the subject in his ‘Histoire des Juifs’ tome V., chap. v.

would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." Daniel is sorely perplexed, for these seventy years had nearly elapsed, and yet there were no signs to indicate that the period of exile had expired. Concluding, therefore, that the captivity was prolonged on account of the sins of the nation, he pours forth fervent supplication. And while he is praying, an angel appears to him, commanded by the Lord to make him understand the truth of the matter. The angel tells him that by these seventy years, mentioned in Jeremiah's prophecy,* ordinary years were not to be understood, but years of release, or weeks of years, *i. e.*, periods of seven years each. Seventy such years would represent seventy weeks of years, *i. e.*, 490 years. The angel continues :—

שְׁבַעִים שָׁבָעִים גְּחֻתָּךְ עַל-עֲמֻךְ וְעַל-עִיר קְדֻשְׁךָ
 לְכֹלֵא הַפֶּשַׁע וְלַחֲתֹם חַטָּאוֹת וּלְכַפֵּר עֹון וּלְהַבְיֵא
 צִדִּיק עֲלֵמִים וּלְחַתֵּם חַוּוֹן וְנִבְיָא וּלְמַשֵּׁחַ קִדְשׁ
 קִדְּשִׁים: וְתִדְרַע וְתִשְׁבֹּל מִן-מִצָּא דְבַר לְהַשִּׁיב וּלְבָנוֹת
 יְרוּשָׁלַם עַד-מָשִׁיחַ נָגִיד שְׁבַעִים שָׁבָעָה וְשָׁבָעִים

* Jeremiah xxix. 10.

שָׁשִׁים וְשִׁנָּיִם תָּשׁוּב וְנִבְנְתָה רְחוֹב וְחֲרוּץ וּבִצּוֹק
הָעִתִּים: וְאַחֲרֵי הַשְּׁבָעִים שָׁשִׁים וְשִׁנָּיִם יִכְרַת מִשִּׁיחַ
וְאֵין לוֹ וְהָעִיר וְהַקֹּדֶשׁ יִשְׁחִית עִם נָגִיד הַבָּא וְקִצּוֹ
בְּשִׁטָּף וְעַד קֵץ מַלְחָמָה נִחְרָצֶת שְׁמֹמֹת: וְהַגִּבִּיר
בְּרִית לְרִבִּים שְׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וְחָצִי הַשְּׁבוּעַ יִשְׁבִּית זָבַח
וּמִנְחָה וְעַל בִּנְיָן שְׁקוּצִים מִשְׁמֵם וְעַד כָּלָה וְנִחְרָצָה
תִּתֵּן עַל-שׁוֹמֵם:

“ Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in the righteousness of old,* and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the holy of holies. § Know, therefore, and understand that from the going forth of the word to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed prince, shall be seven weeks, || and during threescore and two weeks the market place and the ditch

* A. V. Everlasting righteousness.

§ A. V. ‘The most Holy.’

|| A. V. Unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and three score and two weeks: the street shall be built again, &c.

shall again be built even in troublous times. And after the threescore and two weeks an anointed shall be cut off, and be no more:* and the people of the prince that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with the flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and upon the battlements shall be the idols of the desolator, even until the destruction that has been determined shall be poured upon the waster."§

Now Christian theologians assert that this passage is a clear prediction of the appearance and crucifixion of their Messiah, and of the fact that, after he had been cut off, the city of Jerusalem and the Sanctuary were destroyed by the Romans.

* A. V. 'Shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.'

§ My translation differs in some important points, which I have indicated, from the authorized version. The latter, through the neglect of the grammatical construction, and the mistranslation of certain words, has given a wrong sense to several of the clauses.

But this interpretation, as I will show you, is fraught with insurmountable difficulties. “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city to anoint the *Most Holy*. The words קֹדֶשׁ קְדוֹשִׁים are rendered ‘the Most Holy,’ and applied to the Nazarene, although this expression is never applied to a person, throughout the Bible, but invariably denotes part of the Temple—the holy of holies. This verse, then, is alleged to contain a prediction that the Messiah would appear after the lapse of seventy weeks (*i. e.*, 490 years).

Now, what is the event from which these seventy weeks are to be counted? Obviously, the same event as that from which the seventy years of Jeremiah’s prophecy are reckoned,—the destruction of Jerusalem; for the angel had been commissioned to explain to Daniel the signification of the Divine prophecy, that the Lord would accomplish seventy years in the desolation of Jerusalem. The Nazarene ought, then, according to the Christian explanation, to have appeared 490 years after the destruction of the first Temple, but almost all chronologists agree that his birth did not take place until 588 years after that event.

Learned Christian commentators, well aware of this difficulty, have framed various hypotheses to make chronology tally with their explanation of the prophecy. They say that the starting point—the *terminus a quo*—is more accurately determined in the following verse:—"Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem unto the anointed prince, shall be seven weeks. And during three score and two weeks the marketplace and the ditch shall again be built, even in troublous times." According to the Christian rendering, the two periods are taken together. "From the going forth of the commandment unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks." But this translation is altogether opposed to the grammatical construction of the sentence,* as well as to the Masoretic punctuation, the words וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁבָעָה being divided from וְשִׁבְעִים וְשָׁשִׁים by an אֲתַנְחַתָּא—a sign which has the force of a colon. Again, it seems almost inexplicable, that the text should separate the

* For, according to the authorized version, a new sentence commences at הַשִּׁבְעִים. But to warrant this translation, a וְ (vau conjunctive) ought to be prefixed to הַשִּׁבְעִים.

seven from the sixty-two weeks, instead of simply stating sixty-nine weeks. And, indeed, the next (the 26th) verse shows that the seven and sixty-two weeks are not to be taken together as forming one period, the sixty-two weeks being there mentioned as a distinct period. But even if the Christian rendering were correct, it would not overcome the chronological difficulties.* For the going forth of the word to restore Jerusalem is referred to the permission which Artaxerxes gave, in the twentieth year of his reign, to Nehemiah§, to have the walls of the holy city rebuilt, From this date, then, until the birth of the Nazarene, sixty-nine weeks or 483 years should have elapsed. According to common chronology, however, only 445 years intervene between the two events.

“And after threescore and two weeks shall

* Sir Isaac Newton, in his work on the prophecies of Daniel, is candid enough to admit the difficulty which attends the common explanations of this verse. He says, “We avoid also doing violence to the language of Daniel, by taking the seven weeks and sixty-two weeks for one number. Had that been Daniel’s meaning, he would have said sixty and nine weeks, and not seven weeks and sixty-two weeks, a way of reckoning used by no nation.”

§ Nehemiah c. ii.

Messiah be cut off; but not for himself." The expression 'not for himself' is believed by Christians to denote that the Nazarene did not die for his own sins, but in expiation of the sins of mankind. I have already shown you, how opposed this doctrine of vicarious atonement is to Scripture. Apart from this fact, however, the words **וְאִין לֹ** have not the signification here given to them. They simply mean 'And shall be no more,' this being a phrase similar to **נִגְזְרָנוּ לָנוּ** which is correctly rendered in another part of the version 'We ourselves are cut off.'*

But there are other and even still greater difficulties connected with the Christian exposition of this passage. "And the people of the prince that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary" (v. 26). This has been explained as referring to the invasion of Judea by Vespasian and Titus, and to the destruction of Jerusalem and its holy temple. "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week" (v. 27) is said to signify that the Nazarene would cause many of the Jews to

* Ezekiel xxxviii. 12. And thus Rashi explains **וְאִין לֹ**
כמו ואִינוּ

become members of the sect to be founded by him.

In what a strange, absurd confusion should we be involved if we were to adopt this interpretation! The beginning of the 20th verse is supposed to predict the death of the Messiah, which is to happen in the 70th week, and its conclusion to announce the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place many years later. The commencement of the 27th verse, however, is believed again to refer to the Messiah. That verse continues, "And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate." This clause is stated to refer to the entire destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and to their having caused the sacrifices to cease for ever. But surely these events did not take place in the midst of that week (the seventieth) when the Nazarene is said to have died, but upwards of thirty years later. These objections will prove to you that the Christian interpretation of the passage cannot be maintained.

And now you will ask, what then are the events which are predicted in this prophecy? Who is the anointed prince here mentioned? who the anointed that is to be cut off?

Most probably the prophecy refers to the persecutions and oppressions which Israel was destined to endure at the hands of the cruel and fanatic Antiochus Epiphanes. The purpose of this, as of some of the other visions that were vouchsafed to Daniel seems to have been to strengthen and encourage the Jews to remain faithful to their God in those times of trial that awaited them. This vision announces to them that at the expiration of seventy weeks (*i.e.* 490 years) after the destruction of the temple, their sufferings would be at an end, their iniquity pardoned, the piety and righteousness of old re-established, and the holy of holies again anointed, *i.e.* consecrated.* The prophet here foretells events, which were fulfilled in the renewed dedication of the Temple by Judas Maccabeus, and the re-establishment shortly afterwards of the independence of Israel, when kings of their own race and faith again sat on the throne of David, and a new era commenced, which was designated לְחֵירוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל the era of the freedom of Israel. §

* Comp. Exod. xl. 9.

§ *Vide* Herzfeld's History of the people Israel, vol. I, p. 331. The translation of צִדֵּק עוֹלָמִים 'the righteousness of

The period of seventy weeks is subdivided into three different periods of seven weeks (v. 25), sixty-two weeks (verses 25 and 26) and one week (v. 27). "Know, therefore, and understand that from the going forth of the word to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed prince shall be seven weeks." The starting point from which the seven weeks are reckoned must be the same as that from which the seventy years of Jeremiah's prophecy, and the seventy weeks, mentioned in the preceding verse, are reckoned, viz., the destruction of Jerusalem. מוֹצֵא דְבַר 'The going forth of the word,' refers to the word of God proclaimed by Jeremiah.* "For thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you and perform my good word דְּבַרִּי הַטוֹב toward you, in causing you to return to this place." From this date, then, unto the anointed prince would be seven weeks (*i.e.* 49 years). Let us reckon forty-nine years from the destruction of Jerusa-

old' is in strict conformity with the signification which עוֹלָם bears in many passages. Cf. חֲרֵבוֹת עוֹלָם 'the old waste places' (Isaiah lviii. 12) שְׁבִילֵי עוֹלָם 'the ancient paths' (Jer. xviii. 15.)

* Jeremiah xxix. 10.

lem, and we shall arrive exactly at the year in which Cyrus, king of Persia, issued his celebrated edict—"Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of Heaven given me ; and he hath charged me to build Him a House in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people ? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up."* All Jewish commentators therefore agree in saying that Cyrus is the anointed prince here spoken of. There can be no possible difficulty about the title מָשִׁיחַ 'anointed,' applied to him, a heathen king. We read in Isaiah כֹּה אָמַר ה' לְמָשִׁיחוֹ לְכוֹרֶשׁ "Thus, says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus."† He is called נָגִיד 'the prince,' to denote his sovereignty. Both these titles are appropriately applied to Cyrus, a mighty ruler, who overthrew the Median, Lydian, and Babylonian empires, and who was chosen by the Lord to effect the return of His people from captivity.‖

Now the term נָגִיד always denotes a prince

* Ezra i. 2. and II Chron. xxxvi. 23. § xlv. 1.

‖ The terms מָשִׁיחַ and נָגִיד are found together in several passages of the Bible. Cf. I. Sam. ix. 16. I. Chron. xxix. 22.

or ruler, one invested with temporal authority and supreme command ; consequently this title cannot apply to the Nazarene, who never had any temporal power as a prince or ruler.

“During threescore and two weeks the city shall be built again even in troublous times.” These words refer to the fact that during 430 years the Jewish people were continually either disquieted and oppressed by, or dependent upon, the Persian, Macedonian, Egyptian and Syrian monarchies.

“And after the threescore and two weeks, shall an anointed be cut off, and be no more.” The personage here referred to is most probably Onias, the pious high priest, who was put to death through the stratagem of the godless Menelaus. This murder excited most profound indignation. The book of the Maccabees, refers to the event in the following terms : “For the which cause not only the Jews, but many also of other nations, took great indignation, and were much grieved for the unjust murder of the man.”*

* II Maccabees iv. 35. The event here predicted, is narrated *ibid.*, chaps. iii. and iv. How powerful the impression which the death of Onias made upon his contemporaries

It is scarcely necessary for me to repeat that the term מָשִׁיחַ 'anointed' was by no means restricted to the expected deliverer of Israel. It is an appellation given to kings, prophets and priests; indeed to all who were solemnly called and appointed to exalted offices. Here it is applied to a high priest in the same way as we find in Leviticus* אִם הִפְּחָן הַמָּשִׁיחַ יָחֶסֶן "If the anointed priest do sin."

Shortly after the assassination of Onias, the invasion of Judea by Antiochus Epiphanes commenced. "The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with the flood, and unto the end of the war, desolations are determined." Antiochus stormed the city of Jerusalem, massacred 40,000 Jews, and dragged an equal number into captivity. The houses were pillaged, all buildings near mount Zion demolished, and the city walls thrown down, so that Jerusalem was entirely deserted. "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one

must have been may be gathered from the remarkable account of the dream of Judas Maccabæus before his great victory (II. Macc. xv. 12—16.)

* Chap. iv. 3.

week." The persecution lasted exactly seven years; and we know well that during that period, the Hellenizing party basely and traitorously curried favour with the Syrian king. "And in the midst of the week (*i.e.* in the middle of the period of seven years) he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and upon the battlements shall be the idols of the desolator." Three years and a half* before the final victory was achieved by Judas the Maccabee, the practice of Jewish public worship was prohibited under the greatest penalties. A Grecian idol was erected in the Temple and forbidden animals were sacrificed on the altar. Indeed, the accomplishment of each of these predictions can be satisfactorily verified by a reference to the book of the Maccabees. "Even until the destruction that has been determined shall be poured upon the waster;" *i.e.* until Antiochus and his force shall be crushed, and Israel shall be victorious under the leadership of Judas.

The above I conceive to be a correct explana-

* *Vide* Josephus 'The Wars of the Jews,' book I. chap. 1. "He (Antiochus) put a stop to the constant practice of offering a daily sacrifice of expiation for three years and six months."

tion of this obscure prophecy. I cannot assert that the dates of these events, as usually accepted, coincide *exactly* with the years here indicated, for owing to our uncertain comprehension of Biblical Chronology, absolute numerical precision seems almost unattainable.* But the one important point which I trust I have demonstrated to you conclusively, is, that the Christian interpretation of the passage is quite incorrect. Chronological dates, about which there is no doubt whatever, and in the fixing of which Christian commentators themselves agree, prove it to be untenable. And while for us it would be perfectly permissible to say, that this prophecy is an enigma which defies solution, those who consider it a corner-stone of their faith, those who erect upon it a grand theological edifice, should be able clearly and unhesitatingly to unravel the meaning of every phrase comprised in it. In truth, the remarks that Mendelssohn makes in one of his letters† are most appropriate to these verses. He writes as follows :—

* I refer those who would wish to enter minutely into the question of dates to 'Hitzig's Commentary on Daniel.'

† Addressed to the hereditary prince of Brunswick Wolfenbützel.

“I have read all the passages in the ‘Old Testament,’ on which the truth of your belief is supposed to rest. I have read them all with attention, and more than once in connexion with their context. How inexpressibly wretched would be the fate of man, if the eternal happiness of the whole human race were to depend upon the interpretation of some obscure passages, which in times immemorial were written for a people in Asia in a strange language which is now dead. I believe that I understand the language of the original text as well as any modern student; it is, as it were, my second mother tongue. Not one of these passages appears to me to contain the slightest trace of a proof of the Christian hypothesis. Has prejudice warped my judgment, or is it so in truth? The explanations which theologians have given of these verses, seem to me palpably false in many cases, and, in others, most forced and arbitrary. I find to my comfort that modern commentators who proceed to the interpretation of the Bible intelligently and philosophically, abandon many passages which in former times were considered most powerful arguments. I, for my own part, take the liberty of considering some of these disputations as learned toys, and I sometimes

amuse myself with them. But, the Lord have mercy upon my soul! I cannot possibly decipher the grounds for my eternal salvation from the enigmatic visions of Daniel or educe them from the sublime poesy of a prophet."

Yes, brethren, if we would learn how to gain eternal bliss for ourselves, we must turn to the Torah, the law of God. There, in no obscure and enigmatic words, but in language intelligible to the meanest capacity thou art taught, Israel, what the Lord thy God requireth of thee. "To fear the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul."*

Out of this holy book you have this day read to us, my young friend. § You have declared it to be תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת "the Law of truth," by means of which God has planted eternal life in our midst. Determine this day to be henceforth faithful to its holy teachings, to make its lessons the rule of your life. Ah! you stand in need of that blessed staff, Religion, to guide and support you. It has pleased the Lord to take your

* Deut. x, 12.

§ Addressed to a בֵּר מַצּוּחַ

father from you in your early childhood—truly a hard and bitter lot! But you have not been forsaken. The Lord has spoken to you the blessed words which you have read to the assembled congregation **אֲנִי חֵלֶקְךָ וְגִחְלָתְךָ בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**: “I am thy portion and thine inheritance among the children of Israel.”* He has guarded and shielded your childhood. He has left you a fond mother, loving relatives, to care and provide for you, teachers who implant the fear of God in your heart, who imbue your mind with knowledge. Show yourself grateful to them; strive to be a worthy pupil of the school that educates you; strive to become a worthy son of your departed father. Though his body sleep in the dust, his soul watches over you with undying affection. And, even, as during his life-time he placed his hands upon your head, on Sabbaths and on festivals, praying to the Lord that He might make thee as our pious forefathers, as Ephraim and as Manasseh, that He might redeem thee from all evil, so he still implores for you the blessing of Him who is **אֲבִי יְתוּמִים** “the Father of the fatherless.” The Lord bless thee and

* Numb. xxiii. 20.

keep thee. The Lord make his face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace. Amen !”

SERMON IX.

PREACHED ON SABBATH פ' חוקת

(JUNE 27TH).

MY DEAR BRETHREN,

IN expounding to you the principal of the so-called Christological passages in the Bible, I have, I trust, succeeded in proving to you, that not only they do not apply to him whom Christians believe to be their redeemer, but that they do not at all refer to a Messiah. Far be it from me, however, to allow you to imagine that the Bible does not contain predictions, couched in plain and distinct language, concerning the advent of the true Redeemer. The doctrine of the coming of a personal Messiah is the purple thread that runs throughout the writings of our prophets and historians. This belief in the

loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed—their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

What a wondrous, inimitable description is this! It sets forth those grand ideas of Judaism, the belief in the ultimate release of mankind from violence, injustice, tyranny and idolatry, when the מְלֻכּוּת שְׁרֵי 'the kingdom of Almighty God' will be established upon the earth, when the sublime belief in the one and only God will be the universal creed, and will dispel all those dark clouds of error, which have so long obscured the pure notions of the Deity. This prediction tells us that the golden age is not to be looked for, in the past, as the pagan poets taught, but in the future. It teaches us the ele-

vating lesson that the human race is destined ultimately to attain perfection.

Now this and many other prophecies speak not only of a Messianic time, but of a Messianic personage. He is to be a scion of the royal house of David. He is not to be a man of ordinary qualification—not merely wise in the same degree as others, but peculiarly fitted for the requirements of his glorious mission. He will possess profound knowledge of what is right and what is wrong. Whatever man can know or acquire will be familiar to him. He will be gifted with חֵכְמָה, 'wisdom'—wealth of knowledge and moral excellence, בִּינָה, 'understanding'—capacity for judgment, עֲצָה, 'counsel'—the ability to advise and govern, גְּבוּרָה, 'might'—courage and energy in maintaining the right, supporting the innocent, and repressing the wicked. All these gifts are to be crowned with the utmost reliance upon heavenly aid. God will grant him the gift of prophecy, the knowledge of hidden things. In his exercise of justice, he will not be obliged to rely upon the outward appearance that a cause may present to *our* imperfect faculties, his decisions will not be governed merely by the pleadings of the parties interested, but he will divine their secret thoughts and give

judgment in accordance with the absolute truth of the matter in dispute. He will do justice to the weak and helpless by adopting an incorruptibly righteous course towards their oppressors. The passage concludes with a description of the peace, happiness and harmony to be enjoyed under the rule of the Messiah—a description which, for exquisite choice of imagery, surpasses the sublimest sentences penned by profane authors of antiquity.

Let me now show you how impossible it is that the personage here referred to can be the Nazarene. The prophet predicts that the Messiah will be a scion of the house of David. Christianity declares its redeemer to be of Divine origin. Its professors are therefore placed in this dilemma:—If he were Divine, how is it that he is here termed a descendant of Jesse? If he were not Divine, the foundation of their faith crumbles into dust. Now, peruse carefully the whole of the prophecy, and you will not discover a word which can imply that the Redeemer will be of Divine origin.

Another very important argument, may, however, be adduced:—Although various prophets may differ in their description of the details of the future redemption, they all agree in predicting

that the restoration of Israel to the Holy Land will be one of the principal events by which it will be distinguished. Moses, the father of the prophets, writes, "And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and thou shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey His voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will He fetch thee; and the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it."*

We are told in this prophecy, that Israel, after having been scattered among the nations of the earth, in consequence of his disobedi-

* Deut. xxx. 1—5.

ence, will hereafter be gathered in and restored to the land of his fathers. Isaiah, in the words that follow our text, confirms this prophecy. He says, "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth" (verses 10-12). Observe, that the countries of Asia and Africa are mentioned, nay, even the islands of the sea—those distant regions, where, in the time of Isaiah, no Israelite dwelt.

Do not imagine that this prophecy was accomplished in the return of the Jews from Babylonia under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Ezra after a captivity of seventy years. The exiles who were restored at that period did not

amount in number to a sixth part of the entire nation. They consisted only of a portion of the tribe of Judah, which had been carried away by Nebuchadnezzar. Isaiah, however, speaks, in the verse above quoted, not of Judah only, but of the ten tribes, who had been led into captivity from Samaria, by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria. It is also here promised that a king of the house of David, should rule over the restored nation. During the existence of the second temple, however, our forefathers were governed by the Maccabees, a priestly family descended from Levi, and by the house of Herod, who was a foreigner.* Now, surely, "the Lord is not a man that He should lie, a son of Adam that He should repent." Certain it is that the prophecy of the restoration of Israel must one day be fulfilled, and it is equally certain that it was not accomplished during the life of the Nazarene. He lived at the time when the second temple was still standing, and the tribe of Judah still dwelling in their own land. They needed no restoration then, for they were not dispersed until

* For further proofs that these prophecies were not fulfilled at the rebuilding of the second temple, see 'Emunoth Vedeoth,' by R. Saadiah, c. viii.

some time after his death. The ten tribes, however, who had not returned from their exile, to join in re-building the second temple, were not gathered in through his instrumentality, but still await their restoration.

It is further predicted, that at the coming of the Redeemer, Jerusalem and the whole of Palestine will be cultivated and inhabited by the Israelites :

עוֹד תִּטְעֵי בְרָמִים בְּהָרֵי שׁוֹמְרוֹן נִמְעֵי נוֹטְעִים וְהָלְלִי

“Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant and redeem the fruit.*” Has this prophecy yet been fulfilled? Traverse the hills of Palestine, which formerly flowed with milk and honey; you will stand aghast at the desolation there spread before you. All is desert and sterile; the olive groves are cut down, the springs are dried up. And as regards the small number of our brethren who inhabit that land—how abject and forlorn is their state! Instead of dwelling in safety and in happiness, each under his vine and his fig-tree, they are subject to the arbitrary rule of a foreign satrap; they are

* Jeremiah xxxi. 5.

exposed to the lawless depredations of covetous Bedouins.

“ Reft of thy sons, amid thy foes forlorn
Mourn widowed Queen, forgotten Zion mourn !
Is this thy place, sad city, this thy throne,
Where the wild desert rears its craggy stone ?
No martial myriads muster in thy gate ;
No suppliant nations in thy Temple wait ;
No prophet bards the glittering courts among
Wake the full lyre and swell the tide of song ;
But lawless Force and meagre Want are there,
And the quick darting eye of restless Fear,
While cold oblivion, 'mid the ruins laid,
Folds his dank wing beneath the ivy shade.”*

Such is the Palestine of the present day.

Can it be asserted, then, that the prophecies in question relate to the Nazarene ? Indeed some of the most eminent of Christian divines acknowledge the fact that they have not yet been fulfilled. Thus, Lowth in his notes to the translation of Isaiah (on c. xi. v. 16) says ; “ This part of the chapter contains a prophecy, which certainly yet remains to be accomplished.”

Some Christian commentators have endeavoured to explain away the difficulty by asserting that these predictions refer to the spiritual

* Heber's ' Palestine.'

deliverance of God's people. But, is it not contrary to all rules of sound interpretation to explain prophecies, which foretell a nation's calamity, in accordance with their literal meaning, and yet to place a metaphorical construction upon those which announce its future felicity? Yes. Truth, divine truth, steps in and condemns such explanations as sophistries. Truth bids us say, that even as our nation suffered physical dispersion, physical ignominy for the sins of which it had been guilty, so also when its iniquity shall be pardoned, when its appointed time shall be accomplished, the blessings that have been promised will be fulfilled literally. "Thus saith the Lord God: behold I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and will bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes and do them Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will

place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the nations shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore."* Amen.

* Ezekiel xxxvii. 21—28.

SERMON X.

PREACHED ON SABBATH פ' בלק
(JULY 4TH).

“BUT in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted among the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And the multitude of nations shall come and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the Law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat

their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks : nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree ; and none shall make them afraid : for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts hath spoken it." (Micah iv. 1—4).

In these sublime words the prophet predicts the advent of the Messianic days, when the truth and binding force of God's Law, the belief in His Unity, and in the excellence of His moral precepts shall be acknowledged by all men, when peace and tranquillity shall prevail throughout the world. But as these glorious predictions pass before the mind's eye, the question naturally suggests itself to us, Have any of them yet been fulfilled ? Do not, on the contrary, the events of each recurring day prove to us that as yet they have not been realized ? Turn where we may, do we not see that the reign of violence and lawlessness still prevails, that Might still triumphs over Right, that misery and oppression are the lot of a large portion of the human race ?

This very day we have offered up our prayerful thanks unto the Lord, for having in His

mercy preserved the illustrious son of our gracious Queen from the weapon of the assassin. We have also brought the humble tribute of our thanksgiving to the Almighty Disposer of events, for the brilliant triumph which He has accorded to our forces in Abyssinia. And in truth we have reason to rejoice. The entire army and its able leader have nobly upheld the proud traditions of British valour and British discipline. Our armies may in former days have gained victories over warriors of greater gallantry than the Abyssinian hosts; they may have captured fortresses as frowning as Magdala; but the success has often been tardy, and the slaughter, alas! has but too frequently counterbalanced the glory. In this expedition, however, the success has been complete, decisive; our victory has been a tearless one—sufficient cause to arouse feelings of deep and fervent gratitude in every loyal and patriotic heart.

But the question must present itself to our minds: Can the Messianic days have come, when we see an assassin lift his hand against an amiable and beloved prince; when tyrants exist, whose lawless acts must be punished by the valour of our armies? Has the

prediction been fulfilled, "They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree ; and none shall make them afraid ?" Has the prophecy come to pass that "nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more?" Have "the swords been beaten into ploughshares and the spears into pruning-hooks?" Alas ! no. We see the most powerful and civilized nations vying with one another in the maintenance of enormous armies, in the production of the deadliest weapons of destruction. How much wealth and skill are wasted day after day in order that the deep-mouthed cannon may with greater accuracy hurl forth death and destruction upon its doomed victims ! Aye, whoever throws but a glance at the history of the world must acknowledge that the eighteen centuries which have elapsed since the supposed appearance of the Messiah, present a sad and discouraging aspect. We meet with little else but intolerance and persecution and the evils that spring therefrom. At what period since the foundation of Christianity has the sword been sheathed ? Does not the earth still drink the blood of her children ? How, then, can

it be asserted that the Messiah has already come ?

It is further 'promised that at the advent of the Messiah, the truth of God's Law, and, above all, His Unity, will be acknowledged by all nations,—that there will be, then, a perfect unanimity of belief. Has this prediction been yet accomplished ? Let us cast a glance upon the globe : Here the ignorant negro, bowing down before his fetish, says to a stock, "thou art my father," and, to a stone, "thou hast brought me forth ;" there the savage South Sea islander offers human sacrifices to his horrid idol. Millions of in-dwellers of China still practise their absurdly superstitious rites, and, with all their boasted knowledge, do not possess a word in their language to denote the Supreme Being. And the Hindoos, conceiving annihilation to be the greatest good, roll in mire to be crushed by the car of the Juggernaut, or wallow in the swamps of the Ganges to be devoured by the crocodile.* The Fire-worshipper still salutes the rising orb of the sun ; and the fierce

* According to Professor Max Müller ('Chips from a German workshop,') Bra'hminism and Buddhism, together, still claim a decided majority of followers among the inhabitants of the globe.

Arab, "his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him," though proclaiming "there is but one God," adds the false words, "and Mahomet is His prophet." And in addition to these religious systems, there are the multitudinous sects of Christianity, each maintaining the truth of its special dogmas. Can it be then asserted, with truth, that the Messianic days have already endured nearly two thousand years?

This inherent difficulty has not escaped the attention of Christian theologians. Some of them therefore contend, that all these glorious promises are to be fulfilled at a second advent of the Nazarene, when he, with his saints, will rule a thousand years upon earth. This is the doctrine of the so-called Millennium. But not a single clear and unequivocal prophecy can be produced from the Bible which foretells a two-fold coming of one and the same person as the Messiah. The whole scheme of the Millennium must be declared a chimera, an *ignis fatuus* to delude the unwary.* It is not war-

* Basnage in his 'Histoire des Juifs,' chap. 34, says that the theory of a Millennium was propounded with the purpose of inducing Jews to embrace Christianity.

ranted by the word of God, and cannot therefore be maintained.

Let me now proceed to explain two passages that demand our attention; one of them occurs in the Sedra, and the other is connected with the Haphtora of the day.

In the twenty-fourth chapter of Numbers (verses 17-19) the heathen prophet, Balaam, informs the King of Moab, how the nation of Israel would act towards his people in future time. He says:—

אַרְאֵנוּ וְלֹא עֲתָה אֲשׁוּרֵנוּ וְלֹא קְרוֹב דֶּרֶךְ בּוֹקֵב
 מֵעֵקֶב וְקָם שִׁבְט מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וּמַחֵץ פְּאֵתֵי מוֹאָב
 וּמִקְדָּר כָּל בְּנֵי שֵׁט׃ וְהָיָה אֲדוֹם יְרֵשָׁה וְהָיָה יִרְשָׁה
 שֵׁעִיר אֹיְבָיו וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל עֲשֶׂה חֵיל׃ וַיֵּרֶד מִעֵקֶב
 וְהֶאֱבִיד שְׂרִיד מְעִיר׃

“I shall see him but not now; I shall behold him but not nigh. There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all their fastnesses.* And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies, and Israel shall do

* The translation here followed is that of Mendelssohn.

valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city."

That this passage is obscure cannot be denied, for Balaam was not like one of those chosen prophets of the Lord, who could clearly announce the events of the future; he spoke as in a trance, "falling but having his eyes open." It is indeed noteworthy with what avidity Christian theologians seize upon passages, the true signification of which seems purposely veiled. This prophecy is asserted to have been fulfilled in the Nazarene, whose appearance, it is said, was heralded by a star shining in the East. As is the case with so many other predictions **תשובתו בצדו** the argument contains its own refutation.

It is stated in the above passage, that this star of Jacob would wage war with the adjacent nations, with Moab and with Edom. There is no record, however, of the Nazarene ever having been engaged in warfare. It is added "that Israel should do valiantly,"—should prevail over all his adversaries. But, since the appearance of the Nazarene has not Israel remained in captivity or in exile? Is he not still afflicted and oppressed in many parts of the globe?

SERMON XI.

PREACHED ON SABBATH פ' פינחס

(JULY 11TH).

גִּילִי מְאֹד בַּת צִיּוֹן הִרְעִי בֵּת-יְרוּשָׁלַם הִנֵּה מֶלֶכְךָ
יָבוֹא לָךְ צָדִיק וְנוֹשֵׁעַ הוּא עָנִי וְרָכַב עַל חֲמֹר וְעַל
עֵיר בֶּן אֲתָנֹת :

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold thy king cometh unto thee, he is just and victorious : lowly, and riding upon an ass, upon a colt the foal of an ass.” (Zechariah ix. 9).

Most of you, my dear brethren, are aware of the urgency with which Christian theologians assert, that this verse can refer to no one but the author of their faith, because it is recorded

of him in the so-called New Testament that he entered Jerusalem riding upon an ass.

Now I will grant the historical truthfulness of this record, and yet I assert that the fact of the Nazarene having entered Jerusalem, riding upon an ass, is no proof whatever of his being the Messiah who is here promised. Knowing well, as he did, this prophecy of Zechariah, he acted in such a way as to fulfil it. This is clearly proved by the very words in which the 'New Testament' speaks of the circumstance. "All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, behold thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass."

The Nazarene, founding his authority on the prophecies of the Bible, had them constantly in view, and accomplished them so far as lay in his power. But, if his mission were truly divine, the other events by which, as it had been predicted, the advent of the Messiah would be signalised, and which could only be brought about by Divine agency, ought also to have come to pass at his appearance. Now, did they come to pass?

No, they did not; for the prophet, Zechariah,

continues: "And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the nations; and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." (Verse 10). Zechariah here enunciates the prediction in which all the Messianic prophets agree; namely, that at the advent of the Redeemer warfare shall cease and peace be established throughout the earth, that Israel shall be gathered into the Promised Land, and the Messiah rule over them. Need I ask whether any of these predictions have as yet been fulfilled? None but that comparatively insignificant fact—the entry into Jerusalem, riding upon an ass. But how many thousands have, both before and since, entered the Holy City in this manner? The unimportant fact of his entry upon an ass cannot have been mentioned here as an event by which the mission of the Messiah was to be authenticated, but simply as an illustration of his meekness, humility, and peacefulness. Though victorious* he will not

* This is the correct rendering of עֲשָׂה, literally 'helped' (by God), *not* 'having salvation.'

exult in his power ; he will not enter Jerusalem in a triumphant procession, mounted on a prancing war-steed, but like the lowliest of his subjects—riding on a humble ass.

Turn to the fourteenth chapter of the same prophet, and you will find the events which are to occur at the coming of the Messiah, more circumstantially detailed. We are there told that many hostile nations shall war against Judea. These campaigns will entail great misery and suffering upon the nation ; they are **חבלי משיח*** the throes and struggles which will herald the appearance of the Messiah. But, in the end, the nations will be compelled to lay down their arms, and “all the families of the earth shall come unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts.” Then shall the dominion of the Almighty God be established upon earth, the dominion of Wisdom, Goodness, Justice, and Truth. Then shall iniquity be dumb, and all wickedness pass away as smoke ; then shall the dominion of sin be removed from the earth. There shall be no more heathenism, pantheism, or atheism ; no more slavery, intolerance, or despotism.

* Sanhedrin p. 98.

“The Eternal shall be King over all the earth; in that day the Eternal shall be One and His name One.*” The belief in the Unity of God shall be the governing principles of all hearts; all conflicting creeds shall cease, and the animosity and hatred that spring therefrom shall be at an end. All men shall feel and consider themselves as brethren, and think and act as such. One language shall be spoken, the language of truth, mercy, and love. All nations shall come, as our poet sings§, “to serve Thee, to praise Thy glorious name. Their idols they shall throw away, and blush for the gods they had made. All shall worship Thee with one accord, and acknowledge the power of Thy kingdom.”

You see, then, brethren, how entirely our idea of a Messiah differs from that entertained by Christians. The latter believe the mission of a Messiah to consist in delivering mankind from the consequences of their hereditary guilt, and in obtaining atonement for the sins that had been committed by them. Judaism teaches us that in

* Zech. xiv. 9.

§ In the hymn sung in the Mussaf services on New Year and the Day of Atonement, ויאתיו כל לעבדך

the days of the Messiah, mankind shall be redeemed from ignorance, error, and injustice, and the one God universally acknowledged and adored.

Christian theologians have often attempted to prove the superiority of their conception of the Messiah, by asserting that according to Jewish teachings, the blessings with which the Messianic days will be fraught, are intended for Israel alone. Such statements, however, are utterly erroneous, and, to prove this, I need only quote one authority—our great teacher Moses Maimonides* :—

“ The sages and the prophets of old did not pray and long for the Messianic days in order that they might enjoy temporal power and earthly delights, that they might be exalted by the Gentiles, and rule over them. They yearned for the advent of that time on account of the spiritual joys which they knew would then be vouchsafed to them, and the universal intelligence which would then be spread over the earth. In those days, there will be no famine, no war, no envy, no hatred. The all-

* Maim Hilchoth Melachim, c. xii, 4, 5.

engrossing aim of mankind will be to know the Lord."

Even as we see the vivifying influence of spring making itself felt throughout creation, as well in the lofty mountains, as in the lowly dells, invading the most hidden spots, penetrating the roughest rocks, repeating the miracle of the blossoming of Aaron's rod on myriads and myriads of branches, and spreading beauty and fragrance amidst the dwellings of man, thus will the influence of this spring-tide of humanity be felt throughout the world.

Two sayings of our sages enunciate this grand and sublime truth in apt words. We read: **רשב"ג אומר עתידה ירושלם שיתקבצו בתוכה כל הגוים וכל הממלכות**

"The time will come when Jerusalem will contain within herself all nations and kingdoms." You ask, how is it possible that so small a city shall contain all those multitudes? Another passage from the Midrash answers this question:

עתידה ארץ ישראל להיות מרחבת ועולה מכל צדדיה ושערי ירושלם עתידים להיות מגיעים עד דמשק.

* Abot de R. Nathan, c. 35.

“The time will come when Jerusalem will comprise the whole of Palestine, and when the boundaries of Palestine will be extended farther on the east and the west, the north and the south.”* Yes, brethren, in the days of the Messiah, when the worship of One God shall have become the religion of the world, the whole of Palestine shall be a Temple, the whole earth a Holy Land.

My dear brethren! With the exposition of the verse in Zechariah, my course of lectures comes to an end. I cannot conclude without saying, how highly I prize the absorbed interest you have evinced in the subject of my addresses, and how heartily I appreciate the attention with which you have followed expositions, which I feared were almost too abstruse for pulpit instruction.

Let me express the fervent hope that I have succeeded in furnishing you with strong weapons to defend the citadel of our faith against all assaults from without. I say to *defend*—for nothing could

* Sifri on Deut. i. 1. The two passages quoted above are no doubt those to which the late M. Munk so happily alludes in his famous Introductory Lecture, delivered at the University of Paris.

be further from my thoughts than to *attack* the religious convictions of those who conscientiously differ from us in creed.

And I shall also truly rejoice if I have in some measure guided you to admire the wondrous consistency which pervades all the predictions relative to the advent of our Messiah. Let us trustfully look forward to his speedy coming ; let us fervently pray that the blessings of the Messianic days may be soon realized.

כִּי עוֹד חֲזוֹן לַמּוֹעֵד וַיִּפֹּחַ לִפְנֵי וְלֹא יִכְזֹב אִם

יִתְמַדְמַה חֶפֶז לֹא כִּי בֹא יִבְאֵל לֹא אַחֵר :

“ For the vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie : though it tarry, wait for it ; because it will surely come and not delay.”*

Be assured, it is to this glorious consummation that all the events in the history of the world are tending ; though we may not always readily perceive that such is their end. Wherein else did the mission of both Christianity and Mahomedanism consist (notwithstanding their admixture of error) than

* Habbakuk ii. 3.

to teach the worship of one God to a heathen world, and to promulgate the pure and lofty doctrines of the Bible? Two of the greatest and most philosophical minds of our nation, R. Judah Hallevi* and Maimonides have declared this truth. The remarks of the latter are especially worthy of note. He says that "the historical mission of these two religions consists in paving the way for the coming of the King Messiah, when all will worship the Lord with one accord. For, by means of those two religions, the predictions relative to the Messiah, and the Law and its precepts, have been diffused throughout the world, and have penetrated to distant isles."§

But, upon us, the children of Israel, devolves the supreme duty, and to us belongs the great privilege to hasten the approach of the Messianic days, by cleaving heart and soul to the dictates of our religion; by

* Kusari iv. 23

ואלה האומות הם הצעה והקדמה למשיח המהוכה

§ Hilcloth Melachim ix 4. ed. Amsterdam.

לישר דרך מלך המשיח לעבוד את ה' ביחד ביצר כבר
כתמלא כל העולם כולו מדברי משיח מדברי התורה ומדברי
המצות ופשוטו דברים אלו באיים רחוקים :

showing forth to the whole world its grandeur, its truth, its ennobling influence! It is related in the Talmud,* that a sage once asked "When, when, will the Messiah come?" "This day!" was the reply he received. "This day?" he asked in surprise. "There is nought to indicate his coming." Yes **היום אם בקולו תשמעו** "This day, if ye will hearken to God's voice."§ Our redemption will come on the day, at the hour, when we shall have rendered ourselves worthy of it, by our obedience **כלו כר הקצין ואין הדבר תלוי** The time when the Divine promise will be fulfilled, depends upon our sincere penitence and good works; upon our steadfast adherence to, and faithful observance of the precepts of the Lord.||

Grant, O Lord, that we may speedily become worthy of thy salvation! Grant, oh grant that the spring-time of the world may soon approach.** Then will the winter have passed away

* Sanhedrin, p. 98 cf. *ibid* בעתה לא זכו אחישנה לא זכו

§ Psalm xcv. 7.

|| Sanhedrin, p. 97.

** Shir Hashirim Rabba and Pesikta 11 8.

כי הנה הסתיו עבר זו מלכות רביעית הגשם חלף הלך לו זו
השעבור עת הזמיר הגיע הגיע זמנה של מלכות שמים שתגלה

—the winter of false belief; the rain will be over and gone—the chilling blasts of intolerance and persecution. The flowers will appear on the earth—the flowers of universal peace—love and justice. The time of song will have arrived, the song of regenerated mankind, when the kingdom of Heaven shall be revealed. The voice of the turtle-dove will be heard in the land—the voice of the King Messiah, “the voice of him who bringeth good tidings, who publisheth peace, who publisheth salvation, who saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.” Amen.

קול התור נשמע בארצנו קול תייר טב זה מלך המשיח המכריז
ואומר מה נאוו על חהרים וכו'

SERMON XII.

THE ETERNITY OF THE HOLY LAW.

(PREACHED ON THE FIRST DAY OF PENTECOST,

5628).

קול אומר קרא ואמר מה אקרא כל הבשר חציר
וקל חסדו כציון השדה : יבש חציר נבל ציון כי
רוח ה' נשבה בו אבן חציר העם : יבש חציר נבל
ציון ודבר אלהינו יקום לעולם :

“A voice said, Preach . And I said, What shall I preach? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it : surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” (Isaiah xl. 6—8).

My dear brethren, In these words of matchless sublimity, Isaiah announces that great and

important principle of our faith, the immutability and eternity of our Law. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever." These lovely flowers—smiles, as they are, of God's goodness—these jewels of nature, with whose wealth she decks her vernal beauty, and with which we adorn our houses of worship on this festival, to waken in us feelings of gratitude to the beneficent Creator—these flowers that now delight us with their fair tints, their varied hues, their delicious fragrance—how soon will they wither and fade! But that infinite world of moral beauty and Divine harmony, which Revelation discloses, possesses the same freshness, the same vigour now, as on the day when the Lord first vouchsafed us that Revelation three thousand five hundred years ago. And it will retain that freshness and vigour even until the end of time.

לֹא יִחַלֶּיף הָאֵל וְלֹא יִמַּר דָּתוֹ לְעוֹלָמִים לְוָלָתוֹ :

"God will never alter His Law, nor change it for another." No new dispensation has ever, can ever, come to supersede or abrogate the law given on Sinai, וְדָבַר אֱלֹהֵינוּ יָקוּם לְעוֹלָם, for "the word of our God shall stand for ever."

Be it my task on this festival morning to prove to you the truth of this great principle of our faith. I shall do so in two ways:—First, by the comparison of the concurrent testimony of many writers in Holy Scripture; and, secondly, by the consideration of the nature of Revelation itself.

There are some who assert that the precepts of the law were intended to be binding only so long as Israel dwelt in the Holy Land. To show you how untenable this proposition is, I need but mention that many of the behests of the Pentateuch are enjoined to be **חֻקֵּי עוֹלָם** each “a statute for ever.” They are to be kept **בְּכָל לְדֹרוֹתֵיכֶם** “throughout your generations” **מִשְׁבּוֹתֵיכֶם** “in all your dwellings.” The only laws that are not obligatory upon us at the present day are those, the fulfilment of which is intimately connected with the existence of the Temple, and with our residence in the Holy Land,* such as the offering of sacrifices, the giving of tithes, the bringing of the first fruits. All the other commandments are eternally bind-

* כל מצוה שהיא תלויה בארץ אינו נוהגת אלא בארץ (קרושין
לא משנה ט)

ing upon us, at all times and in all our habitations. And thus Maimonides teaches: * “It is clearly set forth in the Torah, that the law is to endure for ever, until the end of time,—that it never will be changed, that nothing will ever be added to, or taken from it, as it is said§: ‘What is revealed belongs unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.’”

In strict conformity with this doctrine, all the prophets, who predict the future redemption of Israel, announce that the law of Sinai is to be carried out in its integrity at the time of that redemption. Ezekiel foretells, in the last eight chapters of his book, the building of the third Temple; and his description of the Divine service that will be performed there, is in minute accordance with the Mosaic precepts. He speaks of Sabbaths, days of new moon and festivals, the years of release and of jubilee. So Malachi, the last of the prophets, exhorts the nation in his parting words: “Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I have commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, the statutes and the ordinances.”||

* Hilchoth Jesode Ha-torah ix. 1.

§ Deut. xxix. 29

|| Malachi iv. 4.

There is a verse, however, in the Book of Jeremiah, which seems inconsistent with this doctrine. It is as follows: * הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים * גָּאוֹם ה' וְכָרַתִּי אֶת בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת בֵּית יְהוּדָה בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה “ Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and the house of Judah.” Theologians of another faith contend that what the prophet here predicts is the revelation of a new law by the author of their religion. But their mistake will at once become apparent if you examine the words that follow, in which Jeremiah clearly explains the meaning of his prophecy—“ Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which my covenant they brake בִּי זֹאת הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר אָכַרְתִּי אֶת בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתֶרִי הַיָּמִים הָהֵם גָּאוֹם ה' גָּתַתִּי אֶת תּוֹרָתִי בְּקֶרְבָּם וְעַל לִבָּם אֶכְתָּבָהּ :

But this shall be the covenant, that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.”

Precious lessons, brethren, are often communicated to us—lessons, in the truth and value of which we believe; yet they fail to exercise any beneficial influence upon our lives. This is caused by our listening to them merely with the *outer* ear; they are allowed to flit across the brain, without making any distinct and vivid impression upon our thoughts. If these truths are indeed to influence our lives, and shape our conduct henceforth, they must be thought out by us. We must listen to them with the *inner* ear of our intelligence, we must make them our own, and endeavour to extirpate all the long cherished feelings, the lingering prejudices within us, which are opposed to their reception.

Our forefathers had heard the greatest truths, the most precious lessons, that were ever communicated to man. God was their teacher. And yet alas! soon after the Divine Revelation had been vouchsafed to them, they forgot the Lord and violated his commands. “They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the golden image.” The heavenly lessons had not penetrated and transfused their being; the evil imagination of their hearts had not yet been obliterated; the ancient vices and failings had not yet

ten years. But the law of the Bible is the 'word of our God,' the most perfect Being, in whom Wisdom, Power, and Will are combined in the highest perfection, who has been from everlasting, 'before the mountains were brought forth, before the earth and the world had been formed'—the God to whom all times and events are open and revealed, the Eye of the Universe who knows *what will be* as certainly as he knows *what was* and *is*; and therefore the word He has spoken must be perfect, adapted to all ages, eternal, immutable. Everything changes upon earth; empires and states rise and fall; arts and sciences, inventions and discoveries, spring up, attain a certain degree of importance, and fall again into desuetude and oblivion; children destroy what their fathers had thought worthy of eternal duration; there is nothing fixed in things here below, but that very inconstancy which incessantly agitates them; yet amid all the changes of times and ages, the law of God remains, for ever, the immutable rule of all times and ages וְדָבָר אֱלֹהֵינוּ יָקוּם לְעוֹלָם "The word of our God shall stand for ever."

How then dare Christianity assert, that a purer and more elevated morality than

that contained in the Bible was preached by its founder? The word of God could not have been imperfect or incomplete so as to require either correction or development. Where the so-called 'new dispensation' agrees with the Bible, it must be needless repetition; where it differs from it, it must be untrustworthy and fallacious.* I hope to prove to you the truth of this proposition in greater detail on a future occasion.

But this day let me beseech you, brethren, to devote yourselves with renewed love, and renewed zeal to the observance of our ancient law.

וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוֶּה הַיּוֹם עָלֶיךָ לְדַבֵּר :

"And these words which I command thee this day shall be upon thine heart."

שֶׁלֹא יִהְיוּ בְעֵינֶיךָ כְּדִיוֹטוֹנָמָא יִשְׁנָה שְׂאִין אָדָם
סוֹפְנָה אֵלָא כְּחֻדְשָׁה שֶׁהִכָּל רְצִים לְקִרְאָתָהּ

"They shall not be in your eyes like an ancient enactment, which has fallen into abeyance, and which no one regards; they shall be like a new

* *Vide* Rabbi E. Benamozegh's 'Morale Juive et morale Chretienne,' where this argument is discussed in all its bearings.

proclamation, just issued, which every one hastens to read and to obey.”*

Ah, brethren, amid the fair bowers and the unshaded glory of Paradise, Adam needed to hear his Father’s voice to keep him from sin; how much more do we, who are so apt to go astray in this world which is fraught with temptations to evil—how much more do we need to listen to His voice, to obey His teachings! Oh, that His lessons of piety and virtue may become a second nature within us, embodied in our whole system of thought!

Am I demanding too much from you? My friends, the ancient Greeks had one sentence which they believed to have descended from heaven—that excellent maxim, ‘know thyself’; and, to evince their gratitude and veneration for this gift, they caused it to be engraved in letters of gold on the temple they held most sacred. We, more favoured than they, have not one *sentence*, but one *book*,—the Book of books—which in very truth has descended from heaven to us. How deeply then should its words be impressed upon the heart and

* Deut. vi. 6, and Sifri *ad locum*.

mind of every man! How heartily should we strive to do according to all that is written therein! How prayerfully should we lift up our eyes to God and resolve with heart and soul,

Thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain.*

But, alas! if we look from *what should be* to *what is*, how sad and disheartening a spectacle meets our view. Unto many, many of us, this—the handbook of the civilized world—remains “a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.” We see our sons and daughters enjoying the advantages of a so-called liberal education והתורה מונחת בקרן זוית but the Torah alone lies neglected, forsaken. § Parents provide their children with instruction in numerous languages, but they except the sacred one—the language in which God speaks to us, and in which we speak to God. We see our children well versed in the knowledge of art and science, skilled in every worldly accomplishment, but they lack that which is better, nobler than any art or science, that which is a greater ornament than any accomplishment—the knowledge of God’s word.

* Shakespeare.

§ Kiddushin p. 66.

I beseech you on this great festival to renew the Covenant with God. Exclaim as your forefathers did* **כָּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע** "All that the Lord has said we will do and hear." Theory and practice, study and action, knowledge and performance, must go hand in hand. **הָיָה שְׂקוֹד לְלִמּוּד תּוֹרָה** "Be diligent in studying the Law." Study it in the same holy language in which the Lord revealed it unto us. I cannot too strongly impress upon you the fact that a thorough knowledge of the sacred text is the trustiest weapon to disarm the attacks of the seducer, who would shake your belief. Study our Law by the help of the light shed upon it by our sages and commentators, those great and wise men who devoted their lives to the exposition of the Torah. Try to gain some knowledge of our wondrous literature, which, varied as it is, springs from, and revolves in wider or narrower circles around, one immutable centre — the Bible.

Fathers, listen to the exhortation of our sages: "He who withholds instruction from his child, robs him, as it were, of the inheritance

* Exodus xxiv. 7.

of his ancestors"—the inheritance consecrated by the tears and hearts' blood of his ancestors.

Mothers, we hear much spoken nowadays of the rights and privileges of women. Let me beg you to consider it your noblest privilege, your most precious right, to train your children in the fear of God. **נשים במאי זכין באקרין** "Wherein does the merit of the women of Israel consist? In causing their children to learn the word of God early in life."* And in truth, the piety of all future generations depends upon the *early* instruction which the child receives. Mothers, you love your children; you pray for their happiness daily, hourly. Remember, that surround them as you may with all the luxuries that wealth can purchase, with all the pleasures your loving care may provide, yet they will not be truly happy unless their minds have been imbued with the sacred lessons of religion, and unless they practise them in their lives.

Let us, then, all give to the world the example of unqualified obedience, unwavering attachment, to God's Law. Let us go forth

* Berachoth 17.

full of trust and confidence to await the time when the Law of Sinai shall burst upon the world in all its divine, enlightening, irradiating glory; when the whole of mankind shall acknowledge its excellence; when the glory of the Lord shall again be revealed, and when all the people of the earth, whom He loveth, shall lie down at His feet, and every one shall obey His eternal, immutable Law. Amen !

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